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WHAT'S UP WITH THE RURAL VOTE?
by JOHN NICHOLS

ERRY'S IRAQ POLICY
David Corn
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HERE RATHER WAS RIGHT
Victor Navasky

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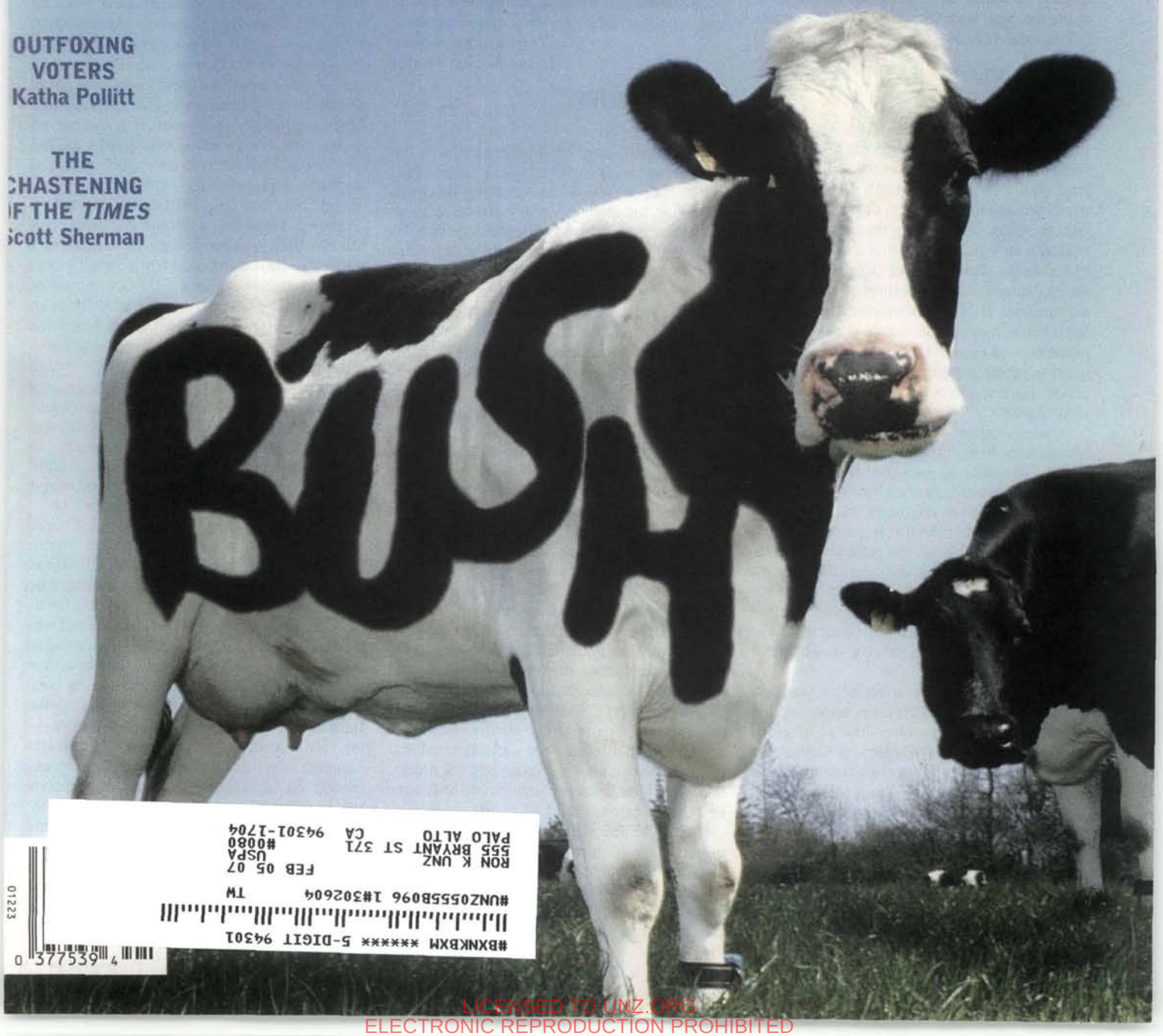
Katha Pollitt

THE CHASTENING OF THE *TIMES*
Scott Sherman



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LETTERS

R.O. BLECHMAN

LABORING UNDER A MISCONCEPTION?

Washington, DC

■ Liza Featherstone may have a point about the vapidity of Labor Day, but she's repeating a historical canard ["Will Labor Come Back?" Sept. 20]. The September Labor Day was not created by union bosses as an alternative to May Day, since it was created two years before May Day by the New York City labor federation. May Day, however, was created by American labor bosses—in fact, the AFL—to initiate the eight-hour day. But it was used instead to commemorate the dead of the Haymarket riot in Chicago, a holiday that then caught on in Europe while the New York City Labor Day became a US national holiday. ALEC DUBRO

BECHTEL YOU NO LIES...

San Francisco

■ Christian Parenti's "Fables of the Reconstruction" [Aug. 30/Sept. 6] purports to provide a firsthand account of reconstruction woes in Iraq. Fable is most assuredly the operative word, because the account is based as much on fiction as fact. In assessing the progress in rebuilding an infrastructure of a country the size of California, Parenti leaves largely unreported the challenges and complexities of accomplishing this task. Years of war, sanctions and neglect left much of Iraq's infrastructure in a state of disrepair beyond even the ingenuity of Iraqi engineers to repair. Subsequent looting and hostile action have made renovations all the more challenging.

Under contract to USAID, Bechtel is helping restore basic living necessities in Iraq. To do the job as efficiently as possible, we are employing thousands of Iraqis at all levels—from construction workers to engineers and plant managers. To suggest otherwise, as the article does, is simply wrong. Wrong, too, is the characterization of who decides what reconstruction projects are undertaken. USAID evaluates projects for viability and value. USAID seeks advice not only from Bechtel but also from Iraqi officials, whose input plays a critical role in whether a project proceeds.

Parenti ignores the substantial progress Bechtel has achieved in the water sector, including restoration in November 2003 of a treated water system to 40,000 residents of Safwan; the dredging, cleanout and restoration of the Sweet Water Canal reservoirs this past March, which more than doubled the drinking-water supply to Basra; and the restart in May of one-third of the Kerkh Waste Water Treatment Plant, enabling sewage treatment in Baghdad by the plant for the first time in many years. This list does not include our many accomplishments in repairing transportation, power and telecommunications facilities.

Parenti's article also deprives readers of a factual account of the contract award process used by USAID for Iraq infrastructure reconstruction work. Contrary to the article's assertion that "as soon as Baghdad fell, Bechtel was in Iraq making deals with USAID," contracts for reconstruction work were awarded to Bechtel in April 2003 and January 2004 after multiple bidders competed for the work. Each competitor was judged on competence, performance, experience and capabilities. According to USAID, Bechtel was selected each time by career professionals because it demonstrated the highest technical competence and was among the lowest in cost. GREG PRUETT, *public affairs manager USAID Iraq Infrastructure Reconstruction Project*

PARENTI REPLIES

Brooklyn, NY

■ Greg Pruett's letter encapsulates perfectly the dynamics shaping, or misshaping, reconstruction in Iraq: an article documenting Bechtel's corruption and incompetence is answered by an errand boy from the US government. Or does he work for Bechtel? His letter's return address is "c/o Bechtel," but he signs himself as a USAID PR official. Reality is creepier than fiction. But this much is clear: The American people, like the Iraqi people, pay for this disaster with treasure and blood while our government does PR damage control for the giant firms sopping up billions in US tax money meant for rebuilding Iraq.

Pruett's letter is as windy and flimsy as most statements from the Green Zone bunkers in Baghdad. He doesn't take issue with any of my main points, perhaps because the most damning indictments come from US government and UN audits. Instead, he lamely quibbles about details. In order: Pruett says I didn't report Bechtel's progress in Basra and Safwan, essentially a complaint that I didn't visit every single job site in "a country the size of California." True, I did not. But I visited many. And I will not repeat official assertions from the likes of Pruett if I can't independently verify them. The reason is simple: USAID and Bechtel officials have lied to me so often, I can no longer trust what they say.

An example: USAID and Bechtel officials told me that repairs at the Rustimiyah South sewage treatment plant were well advanced, that the plant was on the verge of going back online. But when I got into the plant, that turned out to be false. It was at least half a year from completion, even according to Bechtel's schedules, posted in the plant manager's office. I was told similar lies about hospitals and power plants.

As for the Job Order process: Pruett doesn't actually deny the fact that Bechtel generates its own Job Orders, then gives them to USAID for approval. The closed-circuit-style process that I reported was described to me by a Bechtel rep and a USAID man in DC. Job Orders (which for reasons of "security" are treated as veritable state secrets) are generated by Bechtel, then submitted to USAID and almost always approved. More important, the initial "needs assessment survey," which guides Bechtel in creating its Job Orders, was created by Bechtel itself. In essence, USAID knows only what Bechtel tells it.

Pruett asserts, "USAID seeks advice not only from Bechtel but also from Iraqi officials, whose input plays a critical role in whether a project proceeds." What's the proof? Every Iraqi official I interviewed, from the deputy ministerial level to the local public works administration to engineers on the job sites, said the opposite. They all described US arrogance, incompetence and lack of respect for Iraqi know-how. They described being harassed by US officials like Pruett when they spoke out. If Iraqis are so important to US decision-making, why did the CPA's Program Review Board, which approved contracts during the first year of occupation, include only one Iraqi with voting power?

Pruett's claim that a sewage treatment plant had not been treating sewage for many years before the war is contradicted by the plant's staff. His letter insinuates that the Tigris was a sewer well before the US invasion. I visited the main plants and the villages nearby and heard the same story from farmers, fishermen, managers and engineers everywhere: Baghdad's sewage treatment infrastructure was run-down but working until around April 7 and 8, when fighting took the plants offline, and further damage was caused by looting. Can Pruett find a single report from the UNDP or any other credible international source with pre-war involvement in Iraq that can prove his claim? I doubt it.

Regarding contract awards, Pruett takes issue with my assertion that Bechtel was in Baghdad making insider deals with USAID as soon as Saddam fell. But the only evidence he offers confirms my point: The first restricted-bid, cost-plus contract that Bechtel received was signed on April 17. That's less than ten days after Saddam's statue was pulled down by Marines in Firdos Square. More important, primary contracts were offered in a politically vindictive fashion that favored select US firms like Bechtel, Halliburton and Washington Group International. Most EU and Asian firms were excluded. To date the vast majority of contracts have gone to US companies (check the Center for Public Integrity's website for details). This hogging of plum contracts has led to a lack of military support from many European and Asian countries, which has further fueled instability. (But don't get me wrong; I oppose

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EDITORIALS

Bush Spins at the UN

George W. Bush's September 21 speech to the United Nations, marked by an air of unreality and hypocrisy, was insulting to many other nations. Bush presented the United States as the world's premier social worker, leading the fight against AIDS, poverty, child trafficking, human cloning and genocide in Darfur. At best, the Administration has a mixed record in these areas, while the United States continues to give less overseas aid as a percentage of gross national income than any other industrialized country. Moreover, the Administration has focused virtually nonstop on terrorism and Iraq, even when other countries have wanted to talk about trade, economic development and other issues.

Bush further insulted his listeners by speaking about Iraq as if the United States did what other UN members were not willing to do—namely, enforce UN Security Council resolutions. By arguing that the war on Iraq was necessary to enforce such resolutions, he ignored the irony of the situation as revealed after the US invasion: Iraq, it turned out, was in substantial compliance with UN demands to disarm. Bush made no acknowledgment of error in the US assessment of the Iraqi threat or its violation of the UN charter in going to war there, nor any acknowledgment of the chaos and destruction caused by its misguided adventure.

At the same time, Bush presented Iraq and Afghanistan as cases in which the United States was leading a noble cause to bring democracy and liberty to the peoples of the Middle East, while ignoring the problems his policies have helped cause: He made no mention of growing radicalism, heightened hostilities or the money and lives wasted. He likewise gave no sense that the United States is willing to rethink its policies and priorities, and thus offered little reason for other countries to extend significant help in stabilizing Iraq. He did give a nod toward a somewhat more evenhanded approach to the Israeli-Palestinian problem, but he started by talking about the failures of the Palestinian leadership, not the illegal Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

The President's speech, with its grandiose claims of bringing liberty and democracy to the world, contrasted sharply with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's emphasis on the rule of law. "Those who seek to bestow legitimacy must themselves embody it, and those who invoke international law must themselves submit to it," Annan said in remarks before Bush's speech, an implicit criticism of US actions. Annan's approach is far more likely to create the foundations for an international order that makes possible the spread of democracy than is a self-determined and selective American crusade.

Bush's remarks stood in sharp contrast to a speech the day before by his rival for the presidency, John Kerry, in which Kerry promised to work closely with foreign leaders and international bodies to restore stability in Iraq (see David Corn, "Kerry's Iraq Plan," page 4), although he gave little idea of how he intends to accomplish that.

Bush and Kerry will meet in their first debate, devoted entirely to foreign policy, on September 30. Iraq is an important but by no means the only foreign policy issue facing the next President. Voters deserve to hear a serious exchange about Iraq as well as the candidates' plans to advance peace, nuclear disarmament and economic justice. And, as Annan's remarks indicate, we need to know how each candidate proposes to restore the United States, now widely viewed as an outlaw, to good standing among the nations of the world.

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COMMENT

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Kerry's Iraq Plan

ELECTION MATTERS

When John Kerry in a recent speech refocused his campaign by targeting George W. Bush's war on Iraq, he pounded Bush for having "misled, miscalculated and mismanaged every aspect of this undertaking." Answering critics who have claimed he has no plan for Iraq, Kerry once again touted proposals he has been pushing for months. His "alternative" essentially calls for internationalizing the mess in Iraq by coaxing or pressuring other nations to participate in an accelerated reconstruction program, to provide more financial assistance and debt relief and to engage in various security functions, such as protecting the United Nations mission in charge of the upcoming elections and patrolling the borders. As President, Kerry said, he would convene a summit of major nations and Arab states to move others to share responsibility for rebuilding Iraq. He would push NATO allies to become more involved in training Iraqi security forces. He would de-Halliburtonize Iraqi reconstruction by employing more Iraqi contractors and by offering companies in other countries greater opportunity to bid on contracts. He would press for long-term power-sharing arrangements among Kurds, Sunnis and Shiites.

With this plan, a collection of steps designed to achieve increments of progress, Kerry and his aides signal that they realize Bush has created a predicament in Iraq with no obvious solution. Still, they believe the United States should remain militarily engaged in Iraq and take a stab at producing a reasonably stable country that would not be home to large swaths of uncontrolled territory suitable for use by anti-American terrorists. They argue that a new administration more committed to internationalism would have a brief window of opportunity in which the United States could persuade allies and Arab nations that it is in their interest to assist a US-led effort to avert the further destabilization there. But Kerry's plan is not a bold and daring counter to what George W. Bush has done (invade now and ask questions later—or not). It is not a withdrawal. It is not a six-point program promising peace and democracy in Iraq and the swift return of American troops.

Kerry's foreign policy advisers—including former UN ambassador Richard Holbrooke, Senator Joe Biden and former National Security Council aide Rand Beers—are all what one campaign adviser calls "hardheaded internationalists. Their fundamental approach is interdependency." They want to transform Bush's problem in Iraq into one accepted by the entire world, hoping additional support from other nations will increase the odds that the disorder can be contained and perhaps undone. Kerry, one adviser notes, is not obsessed with the war as a project "to bring democracy to the region. A democratic Iraq would be good. But this is not an ideological goal for Kerry. His goal is a stabilized Iraq that is not a threat."

Knowing that a plan for muddling through with greater overseas assistance lacks punch and appeal, Kerry's advisers maintain that the man is more important than the plan, that the crucial point is that Kerry would not have steered the United States into

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a fiasco in Iraq. They also make the reasonable case that it is difficult for Kerry to present a specific how-to blueprint because it is unknown what a President Kerry would encounter come January 20, 2005. Speaking with reporters after Kerry's speech, Biden noted that Kerry's actions will depend on whether he "inherits a Lebanon" [an Iraq in chaos]. "If things are moving along"—meaning elections and the training of Iraqi security forces—"then there is the probability we can draw down troops likely by the summer [of 2005] and be out of there within four years," Biden says. What if it's Lebanon? Biden is vague. Joe Lockhart, a new Kerry senior adviser, quickly adds, "We'll stay away from answering hypotheticals."

But the hypothetical is the only thing Kerry and his advisers can offer. "With all these steps, he would try to reach the point of the second election now scheduled to occur by 2006," says one adviser. "He would have a year to build up the security forces, and then he could get out. A significant assault from the insurgents may increase pressure to pull out sooner. But it is hard to imagine Kerry leaving that quickly."

In the meantime, Kerry would have to decide how to handle the insurgency. "Bush has decided to leave them alone until Iraqi security forces are trained," this adviser says. "But that day is not coming soon. So now we have possible safe havens for terrorists in insurgent-controlled areas. There is no consensus among Kerry's people on this point. Kerry might go in hard and fast and try to deal with them, with some real downsides, such as much unhappiness among Iraqis. But the longer you let it go, the worse it is for our troops. It's a dilemma." Another adviser adds, "If Iraq becomes even uglier, there might be tension among his foreign policy team between a pull-out-now crowd and a muddle-through crowd. But this has not emerged yet. In terms of the general approach, there is not much disagreement."

Kerry's plan is far from surefire. European nations say they have no desire to send combat troops to Iraq. But Kerry advisers contend that Europeans and others will respond to a Kerry administration and at least contribute a greater number of troops for training and noncombat missions. Can US or NATO troops adequately train Iraqi forces? That's another unknown. The Bush camp argues that the President has already adopted much of Kerry's proposal—a criticism rejected by Kerry, who accurately notes that Bush has been unable to get other nations to live up to their commitments under UN Security Council Resolution 1546, passed last spring.

"This is not going to be simple," says a Kerry aide. "If you want simplicity, vote for Bush." As another Kerry adviser puts it, "There's a chance Kerry's approach won't work and will be a fiasco, and we will end up staying in for a year or so longer than we should have." In that case, Kerry—who as an antiwar leader in the 1970s once famously said, "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?"—will have done just that. But Kerry's current plan—or intention—is to ask US troops and other nations to confront, not run from, Bush's mistake in Iraq in order to prevent Bush's misguided plan, sold on the basis of a phony threat, from bequeathing to the United States and the world what may well be a true threat.

DAVID CORN

Where Rather Was Right

When it comes to presidential politics there seem to be a half-dozen narratives favored by big (and small-minded) media: Who's ahead?, "Gotcha!", the (cynical) assumption that all policy pronouncements are explainable as political maneuvering, the idea that a campaign is being run by either skilled pros or incompetent losers, and here's what [name your candidate] ought to do, etc.

Last week the dominant narrative was Here's what Kerry ought to do. The week before it was Who's ahead? And this week it was "Gotcha!" The only problem was, they "got" the wrong guy—and missed the main issue.

Yes, Dan Rather and his *60 Minutes II* colleagues ought to feel embarrassed, but so should his *60 Minutes I* colleagues who seemed more eager to exonerate *60 Minutes* from having anything to do with those tainted documents than to support their colleague, who has anchored CBS News with passion and professionalism for twenty-three years.

In retrospect, as many bloggers and Monday- and Tuesday- and Wednesday-morning quarterbacks will tell you, instead of going with documents of dubious provenance they should have gone with Marian Carr Knox, who, as Lieut. Col. Jerry Killian's secretary, would have typed them but says she didn't, yet adds that the information in them accurately reflects the views of her boss.

If, as seems to be the case, the underlying point of the *60 Minutes II* episode was accurate, then it's a sad comment on the rest of the press that they have relentlessly and repeatedly focused on what Dan got wrong and relatively ignored what Dan got right (namely, that pressure was put on Killian to "sugar coat" Bush's National Guard record, that Bush got into the Guard via favoritism, that he got paid for meetings he didn't attend, that he missed the physical he signed up for, and all the rest).

What Rather got right relates to yet another presidential narrative—the one having to do with the President's character. If indeed Bush skipped out on his National Guard obligations at the time, that does not speak well for his character then. And if he arranged to have this dereliction expunged from his file after he became President, that does not speak well for his character now. (It may also be a violation of the law.)

Of course, if the media do their job between now and Election Day, there is one other narrative they ought to bring into focus—on the front page, the editorial page, the nightly news, in questions for the candidates during debates and everywhere else—and that is the issue that should have been front and center from the outset: the narrative about Iraq. Is the US war on Iraq an extension of what we did in Afghanistan, a real "war on terrorism" that's making the world a safer place? Or, especially in the absence of weapons of mass destruction, is it a disastrous diversion that has made our country less secure, resulted in the deaths of more than a thousand Americans and tens of thousands of Iraqis, and earned the United States unnecessary enemies around the world?

That, rather than Rather, is the issue. VICTOR NAVASKY

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COMMENT

Nonproliferation Politics

Nonproliferation—the global campaign to prevent the further spread of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons—must be applied in a nondiscriminatory fashion to be effective. But the Bush Administration has been using nonproliferation policy to demonize foreign governments it doesn't like and to manipulate US public opinion. The most egregious example was the totally discredited claim that Saddam Hussein was on the verge of manufacturing nuclear weapons—a claim used to manufacture support for the US invasion of Iraq.

Another example is the charge, made in 2002 by John Bolton, Under Secretary of State for nonproliferation, that Cuba had an offensive biological-warfare program. Many analysts viewed this claim as a thinly veiled effort to attract support among anti-Castro Cuban-Americans in the pivotal state of Florida. On September 17 the White House circulated a new intelligence estimate indicating that Cuba possesses a limited capacity to manufacture biological warfare munitions but is not known to be currently doing so.

It is against this backdrop of highly politicized nonproliferation policies that we must judge recent US moves regarding Iran, India and the two Koreas.

The crisis over Iran's nuclear activities has been gaining steam since last fall, when the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed that Iran had undertaken a previously undisclosed effort to "enrich" natural uranium—that is, increase the proportion of the fissionable U-235 isotope in its total content. The Iranians insisted that these efforts were intended to manufacture fuel for civilian power reactors, but US officials, led by Bolton, claimed they were part of a covert Iranian bomb project. Washington immediately sought to punish Iran by bringing the matter before the United Nations Security Council, which is empowered under the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to impose sanctions on signatory states (Iran signed in 1968) that violate its provisions. But the major European powers, led by France, Britain and Germany, prevailed on the IAEA's board of governors to engage in negotiations with Tehran aimed at averting a crisis. In October 2003 Iran agreed to suspend its enrichment activities in return for a European pledge to provide advanced technology for its civilian nuclear-power program.

Since then, Iran has shown itself more amenable to IAEA requests for intrusive inspections but continued to prepare the groundwork for a stepped-up enrichment program by manufacturing high-speed centrifuges and announcing plans to convert uranium ore into a gas suitable for use in such devices. This, in turn, has allowed Washington to reiterate its claims of a covert Iranian bomb project and to call for tougher action by the IAEA. On September 18, under enormous US pressure, the IAEA delivered an ultimatum to Tehran: Halt all suspect nuclear activities by November 25—the date of its next board meeting—or face the prospect of UN-imposed economic sanctions. Iran responded that if the IAEA proceeded down this path it would lift its self-imposed moratorium on nuclear enrichment activities and consider with-

In Fact . . .

THE FALL OF LEWIS LAPHAM

■ Lewis Lapham, whose broadside against contemporary conservatism is reviewed on page 36, has been editor of *Harper's* since 1983 (in addition to an earlier stint). He has become as strongly identified with the magazine as Mencken was with *The American Mercury* or Ross with *The New Yorker*. That lonely eminence makes him something of a target for critical potshots from his lessers. Thus, when libertarian *Reason*'s blog pointed out that Lapham had written about the GOP convention in an issue of the magazine that appeared before the event took place, a wave of much tsk-tsking coursed through the media and Lapham rightly apologized to his readers. Jack Shafer of *Slate* was even inspired to expatiate at length on how it just goes to show how predictably liberal *Harper's* is these days. Frankly, dears, we don't give a damn. Lapham's *Harper's* article merely asserts that the "speeches in Madison Square Garden affirmed the great truths" of conservatism, i.e., "government the problem not the solution; the social contract a dead letter; the free market the answer to every maiden's prayer." Seems to us a fair summary of the Republican rhetorical gusts of August.

TRUE WEALTH

■ *Forbes* magazine's annual celebration of the 400 richest Americans has just appeared. As a kind of companion document we recommend another report, *I Didn't Do It Alone: Society's Contribution to Individual Wealth and Success*. The authors are Chuck Collins, Scott Klinger and Mike Lapham, of Responsible Wealth, a group of affluent Americans who advocate reducing economic inequality and champion the estate tax and taxing the rich. Their report features stories by wealthy people crediting their success to social advantages, luck and privilege. They are contrasted with self-proclaimed self-made types who deny a debt to society (www.faireconomy.org).

THIS WEEK ON THE WEB

■ "The Daily Outrage" is back! These days the outrages come from all over: lobbyists stifling reformers in both parties, military contractors profiting from "pre-emptive" war, the media echoing government deceptions and a right-wing attack-machine defending neoimperialists and distorting progressive values. So read Ari Berman's weblog, which aims a spotlight at the forces that corrupt our democracy. It's updated every weekday. And if you want a palliative to outrage, read this week's "Editor's Cut" by Katrina vanden Heuvel, who highlights some good news: David Soares, a candidate of the Working Families Party, has won the Albany County [NY] Democratic primary for District Attorney. Soares transformed the race into a referendum on the Rockefeller drug laws, which he opposes (www.thenation.com).

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—Al Franken

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COMMENT

drawing from the NPT. On September 21, Iran announced it would indeed recommence its enrichment program.

If Iran goes further and carries out its threat to withdraw from the NPT, the global nonproliferation effort will be substantially undermined and the tempo of illicit weapons activities in the Middle East will surely accelerate. If George W. Bush wins in November, he is certain to step up Washington's drive for "regime change" in Tehran, possibly conducting pre-emptive raids on Iranian nuclear facilities, or giving Israel a green light to do so (a move hinted at by senior Administration officials), or unleashing antigovernment Iranian militias based in Iraq to conduct armed attacks inside Iran, a course neocons favor. Such actions would strengthen the hand of reactionary clerics in Iran and provoke stepped-up Iranian support for Shiite militias in Iraq. These actions would also undermine any effort to adopt a nuclear-weapons ban in the Middle East that would include Israel—the only sure way to foster nonproliferation in the region.

Rebuffing the IAEA's September 18 ultimatum, Iranian authorities insisted that their enrichment activities are permitted under the NPT for nonmilitary purposes. They note that other countries engage in uranium enrichment for peaceful purposes without being subjected to the same punitive treatment.

To be sure, the NPT has its flaws—it allows nations like Iran to develop nuclear capabilities up to the point of manufacturing weapons, and it doesn't adequately address the difficulty of distinguishing between peaceful and military applications of such technology. Modifications of the treaty are surely needed to better detect and prevent illicit uses, but such improvements will be difficult to achieve as long as the treaty is applied in a discriminatory fashion and regional powers like India, Israel and Pakistan remain outside it.

The widespread perception that the United States and its allies often engage in discriminatory nonproliferation practices—whereby some states are exposed to harsh punishment for NPT infractions while others get by with a slap on the wrist—is given added credibility by recent disclosures concerning South Korea and India. On September 2, Chang In Soon, the head of South Korea's Atomic Energy Research Institute, admitted that scientists under his command had conducted several experiments in 2000 aimed at enriching uranium using advanced laser technologies. Despite his assertion that the experiments were insignificant and quickly terminated, Chang's admission led to speculation that South Korea had engaged in a more elaborate effort to acquire nuclear-weapons technology.

Washington's failure to vigorously condemn the South Korean experiments after Chang's admission is surely viewed by Iranian and North Korean officials as evidence of a double standard—an assessment that can only lead to greater intransigence on their part. "It has become difficult to prevent expansion of a nuclear arms race because of South Korea's test," declared a senior North Korean official on September 9.

Pervasive suspicions of a US double standard on nonproliferation were fueled by another recent disclosure: that the White House has decided to relax its restrictions on the transfer of sophisticated nuclear and space technology to India, a member of the nuclear club and a burgeoning missile power. The restrictions were imposed decades ago in an effort to hobble India's nuclear arms and ballistic missile programs and were tightened following the Indian nuclear weapons tests of May 1998. But now US firms will be able to sell the sophisticated equipment to India's civilian nuclear power plants and commercial space program—equipment that could be used to expand and enhance India's nuclear-armed ballistic missile force, which is already capable of striking Iran and China. The easing of restrictions will surely be read in Tehran and Beijing as tacit approval of such efforts and lead to deeper resistance to American calls for tougher nonproliferation measures.

If Washington truly wants to make substantial progress on this critical issue, it must repudiate its flawed policies and adopt a more consistent, nondiscriminatory stance. In the case of Iran, that means postponing any talk of sanctions as long as there is any possibility of persuading Tehran to halt all weapons-related activities permanently under rigorous IAEA inspection—an approach that can succeed only if the Iranians are not barred from conducting peaceful nuclear activities allowed to other NPT signatories. Likewise, the United States must demand full disclosure from South Korea of its nuclear experiments and insist that America will not condone weapons-related activities by any aspiring power, including those friendly to this country. Finally, regarding North Korea, Washington must agree to one-on-one, face-to-face talks with the North Korean leadership and offer Pyongyang the same sort of economic rewards recently given Libya in return for its decision to halt all WMD activities.

Such a measured, evenhanded approach cannot be carried out by those who view nonproliferation as political warfare by other means. Arms-control advocates must demand the resignation of Under Secretary Bolton. His misuse of intelligence data on Cuba for political purposes renders him unfit to represent

(Continued on Page 28)

CALVIN TRILLIN

A Poem of Republican Populism

Our policies address the cares
Of heiresses and millionaires.
Our point of view reverberates
With folks who live behind high gates
And folks whose country clubs may lack
A single Jew, a single black.
We're backed by all the CEOs.
We waive the regs that bring them woes.
To comfort them is our intent.
Yes, though we always represent
The folks who sit in corporate boxes,
The gratifying paradox is—
And this we love; it's just the neatest—
The other party's called elitist.

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Discovered: The First United States Silver Dollar

Coin Collector's Hunch Nets Silver Dollar Worth $10 Million!

Dana Point, CA. Call it a hunch, but when Steve Contursi got his first look at a silver dollar dated 1794 he *knew* deep down in his gut that he had something unique. A long-time coin collector, Contursi had spent his entire life studying coins. So when he saw the incredible detail and sharp designs of Miss Liberty with her finely detailed flowing hair, it dawned on him that this coin was extraordinary. The more he studied it, the more convinced he became that the coin staring him in the face was more—*much more*—than simply a 210-year-old coin.

Shown larger than actual size of 39 mm

Experts Agree: First Recorded Coin Minted in 1794

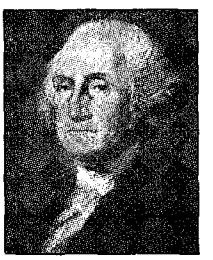
When professional numismatists compared the coin side-by-side with a 1794 copper trial piece at the Smithsonian they ALL came to the same conclusion: *this must be a priceless national treasure—the* ***FIRST*** *silver dollar ever struck by the U.S. Mint!*

First U.S. Silver Dollar Valued at $10 Million

Confirmation of the historic significance of the find sent Contursi's head spinning. It was as if he had just been told he had the winning lottery ticket! He soon had the coin insured for **TEN MILLION DOLLARS** making it one of the world's most valuable coins—and making his hunch one of the most lucrative gut feelings of all-time!

How George Washington's Tea Set Ended Up as the First Silver Dollar

The story of how this coin came to be is no less amazing than its discovery. Following the Revolutionary War, our Founding Fathers turned their attention to the task of establishing a new government complete with its own currency system based on the dollar. Thanks to a shortage of precious metals, the new U.S. Mint announced it would accept silver from citizens for the purpose of striking coins. People could bring their silver to the Mint and receive silver coins in return. As a show of confidence in both the mint and the new nation, George Washington donated his wife's ornate silver set to begin the process of making our first silver coins. In this way, George Washington became not only the father of our country, but also the father of our coinage!



Specifications for the 1794 First Silver Dollar Commemorative

Obverse:	**"Flowing Hair" Liberty**
Reverse:	**Eagle and Laurel Wreath**
Designer:	**Robert Scot**
Content:	**100 mils .999 pure silver**
Weight:	**27 grams**
Condition:	**Gem Proof**
Edition:	**Limited**

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This is the ***first-ever*** *public release of this special Proof and it has been beautifully struck and layered in 100 mils of 99.9% pure silver.* With frosted images and deep mirrored fields, this is more than a commemorative, it's a breathtaking work of art in silver!

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This special Proof carries an official issue price of $40.00, but during this special advance period, you may reserve your own commemorative Proof for just $19.95 plus S&H *(Save $20.00 by Ordering Today).* A signed Certificate of Authenticity will attest to the history, specifications and Limited Edition status of this exclusive private mintage. Your 1794 First Silver Dollar Commemorative Proof will come in a clear acrylic holder housed in a deluxe presentation case. **Your order must be placed during this advance issue period to qualify for the special $19.95 price** You must be 100% satisfied or simply return it within 30 days for a prompt refund of your purchase price.

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JONATHAN SCHELL

Why We Must Leave Iraq

Washington Post columnist Richard Cohen, once a supporter of the war in Iraq, has been rethinking his position. The day after Senator John Kerry's speech at NYU attacking the President's war policies, Cohen wrote, "I still don't think the United States can just pull out of Iraq. But I do think the option is worth discussing."

Well, let's discuss it.

The United States should just pull out of Iraq.

There are many issues in politics that are very complicated. The war in Iraq is not one of them. Common sense in regard to this war rests on two rock-solid pillars. (1) The United States should never have invaded Iraq. (2) Now it should set a timetable to withdraw and leave. These two propositions go together. The litany of reasons why it was wrong to invade Iraq—that there were no weapons of mass destruction in the country, no ties to Al Qaeda and only the dimmest prospect of democracy—are the same as the reasons why it is now wrong to remain there.

And in truth, the war would have been an even greater mistake if the reasons given for it had been based on reality—if the weapons of mass destruction and ties to Al Qaeda had existed. People don't have to ask themselves today what might have happened if Vice President Cheney had been correct in saying, as he did before the war, that Iraq had "reconstituted its nuclear weapons" and if CIA director George Tenet had also been correct in saying that the sole circumstance in which Saddam might use weapons of mass destruction would be if his power were threatened. Had both men been correct, there might have been a use of weapons of mass destruction against American troops in the Iraq theater, or even on US soil (if the ties to Al Qaeda had also been real), and a possible use of nuclear weapons by the United States in retaliation. How fortunate we are that Cheney, at least, was factually mistaken! That he was wrong is the bright side, if you like, of the current mess. His disastrous factual errors may have saved us from his catastrophic policy errors.

Nor has the war brought with it any new justification for itself. On the contrary, it has added fresh reasons for leaving. If the story of the occupation so far—a story of scarcely imaginable incompetence, misfired intentions, collapsing plans, multiplying horrors and steadily growing resistance—teaches a single clear lesson it is that the United States is a radicalizing force in Iraq. The more the United States pursues the goal of a democratic Iraq, the farther it recedes into the distance. The longer the United States stays the course, the worse the actual outcome becomes.

Let there be as orderly a transition as possible, accompanied by as much aid, foreign assistance and general sweetness and light as can be mustered, but the endpoint, complete withdrawal, should be announced in advance, so that everyone in Iraq—from the beheaders and other murderers, to legitimate resisters, to any true democrats who may be on the scene—can know that the responsibility for their country's future is shifting to their shoulders. The outcome, though not in all honesty likely to be pretty, will at any rate be the best one possible. If the people of Iraq slip back into dictatorship, it will be their dictatorship. If they choose civil war, it will be their civil war. And if by some happy miracle they choose democracy, it will be their democracy—the only kind worth having.

Kerry's speech was the beginning "at long last" (his words) of a serious debate in the campaign over the war. The speech was heralded by his charge, a few days before, that George W. Bush lives in a "fantasy world of spin"—the first telling, or even widely audible, phrase that Kerry has used in his entire campaign for President. Bush, indeed, has an audacious personal quality that has somehow served him well so far: full frontal repudiation of facts known to all. Faced with the absence of WMDs in Iraq he once simply said, "We have found the weapons of mass destruction." Faced with a Presidential Daily Brief titled "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in the U.S.," he and his spokespersons called it "historical." In his universe, faithfulness to delusion is "consistency." It reached its apogee at the GOP convention, where the President presented a picture of the war in Iraq from which all current facts—the street fighting, the bombing, the kidnappings, the torture, the departing allies—had been removed. "Staying the course" meant staying in the imaginary world.

At the convention, the President, if we are to judge by his sudden dramatic rise in the polls, apparently drew a majority of the country into that world with him. Yet almost immediately thereafter, he sank again in many polls. As of this writing, the polls are in anarchy, showing anything from a double-digit Bush lead to a dead heat. The polling may reflect the confusion of a public groping to deal with its immersion in the imaginary world. Like a movie audience emerging from a feel-good blockbuster onto the icy streets, the public probably cannot help noticing that what is before its eyes is quite different from what was on the screen. The bright and shining lies are always more appealing, at least for a while, than the plain truth. Could the resulting double-vision be the reason for a certain flip-flopping, so to speak, of the public itself?

In his speech, Kerry embraced one of the pillars of common sense, finally declaring that the war was a mistake, saying of the President, "Is he really saying that if we knew there were no imminent threat, no weapons of mass destruction, no ties to Al Qaeda, the United States should have invaded Iraq? My answer is no..." He did not proceed, however, to the necessary corollary, that withdrawal is necessary, though he hinted at it. Each of his concrete proposals—to find allies, train Iraqi police, speed up reconstruction, hold elections—is fine, but none guarantee the success in creating a "viable" Iraq that he still seems to promise. He has put one foot in the real world, but left the other in the imaginary world, leaving himself open, still, to the flip-flopping charge that Bush immediately leveled against him again. Only one-hundred-percent fantasy will do for the President. But Kerry has at least begun the journey—one as hard as the journey from his service in Vietnam to his protest against it—toward the real. Give him credit for that.

Jonathan Schell is the Harold Willens Peace Fellow at the Nation Institute.

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

C'mon Ralph, You've Nothing to Lose

If I were Ralph Nader (and given the number of people screaming at me about stabbing Kerry in the back, I sometimes think I am), I'd get on the plane to Palestine and Baghdad and spend less time on ballot-access fights with lawyers working for the Democrats.

There are about six weeks left to run in this campaign, and Nader needs to finish off with a bang. The Democrats have got him stuck in the trenches, running from one courtroom to another. It's the only campaign they know how to fight. They can't sell Kerry. Their hearts aren't really in it, but when it comes to stopping people from being able to vote for Nader, they're firing on all cylinders. Here's the SEIU putting $65 million of its members' dues into the Kerry campaign and deploying hundreds of organizers across the country, working twenty-four hours a day to keep Nader off the ballot. It's tying Nader down. He's fighting twenty-one legal cases in seventeen states, and as Nader himself concedes, "The ballot access has drained our time and our resources."

Next will be battles over Nader's exclusion from the debates (along with other candidates, like the Libertarian Michael Badnarik). At the end of the day Nader will be looking at a vote for him on November 2 in the low single digits, and that'll be that. The way things look in mid-September, the Democrats won't be able to blame him if their man goes down, because the person sabotaging John Kerry is manifestly and unarguably John Kerry. But a more important fact about the way things look in mid-September is that History's tempo is picking up. If ever there was an opportunity for Nader to seize the hour, it's now.

Even as America's reach in Iraq contracts to a few acres in downtown Baghdad, George Bush goes to the UN and says of the US occupying force, "The proper response to difficulty is not to retreat. It is to prevail." Kerry visits NYU, says he'd have done it all differently and then, by way of constructive ideas, mumbles absurdly about the need to involve America's allies in the occupation, which sounds like General Custer wiring the Canadians to come help him turn the tide at the battle of the Little Bighorn.

At home there's been a sharp escalation in anger and resistance to the war from the people press-ganged to fight it. Soldiers from a Fort Carson, Colorado, combat unit tell reporters angrily they've been issued an ultimatum: Re-enlist for three more years or get transferred to units scheduled for deployment in Iraq. In Fort Dix, New Jersey, 635 soldiers from the South Carolina National Guard scheduled to depart for a year or more in Iraq were under a disciplinary lockdown in their barracks for two weeks.

During Laura Bush's speech in New Jersey in mid-September, Sue Niederer was arrested for demanding to know why her son was killed in Iraq, interrupting Laura to ask, "If this war is so righteous, why don't you send your children?" She was escorted out and started talking to reporters—which was when she was handcuffed and led away. Niederer was wearing a shirt with her dead son's picture and the words "President Bush, you killed my son."

Meanwhile, in the Bay Area an Army vet represented by attorneys Michael Sorgen and Joshua Sondheimer, in association with the Military Law Task Force of the National Lawyers Guild, is bringing suit against the "stop loss" retention of up to 40,000 service members forced to serve beyond the expiration of their enlistment terms since the war in Iraq began.

Here are opportunities for candidate Nader to remind people that on the number-one issue on the election agenda, between Bush and Kerry the electorate is offered no choice. He should give press conferences with the parents of soldiers killed in Iraq, file suit on behalf of Sue Niederer for wrongful arrest, array himself with those dragooned into the war.

Here too are opportunities to break through the iron ceiling maintained by the two parties on discussion of Israel's crimes against Palestinians, a topic on which Nader has already expressed himself with some force. Why doesn't he travel to Palestine, stand in front of the illegal apartheid wall and denounce it, speaking as an Arab-American on behalf of the Palestinians beleaguered by US-subsidized Israeli terror?

From there he could travel on to Baghdad, have parleys with all relevant parties, denounce the needless sacrifice of American and Iraqi blood, the Allawi puppet government, the theft of Iraqi national assets, the enrichment of Halliburton and the rest, and call for immediate US withdrawal and elections.

In other words, across the next few weeks, Nader needs to show just how different he is, just how much is off the agenda in this miserable joke of an election. He needs to go into the South (surrendered by Kerry to the Republicans), especially Florida, to talk to disenfranchised voters, many of them kicked off the voting rolls because of drug offenses. In Cleveland or Akron he should stand with welfare moms pushed off the rolls by Clinton with Kerry's vote—that's the same Kerry who told women's leaders he would treat them at arm's length because they are a "special interest." As Robin Blackburn recently stressed in *CounterPunch*, Nader and running mate Peter Camejo have nothing to lose, so they should embrace every radical and progressive cause they can think of. On Robin's list: the outlawing of factory farming, $30,000 for every American reaching the age of 18, an end to the laws against drug use, amnesty for all those convicted of drug offenses, an end to the death penalty, a contiguous Palestinian state with half the land of British-Mandate Palestine and a port on the Mediterranean, evacuation of all US bases abroad, not just those in Iraq. They could also come forward with a plan to restore employers' contributions to health and retirement programs by requiring companies to finance a network of state trust funds dedicated to this purpose.

At the moment, the Nader campaign is mired in legal procedure. The way Nader can counteract his former supporters who have signed an ad telling him to step aside is to remind the world forcefully of the need to contest the prime function of presidential contests in our age, which is to keep every important issue off the table. ■

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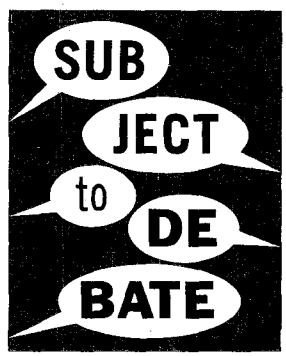
KATHA POLLITT

Fox Hunts Student Voters



Juliana Zuccaro and Kelly Kraus thought they were exercising their civic rights and responsibilities on August 31 when, as officers of the Network of Feminist Student Activists at the University of Arizona in Tucson, they helped set up a voter-registration drive on the UA mall. Imagine their astonishment when the local Fox affiliate news team showed up and lit into the young women. "The reporter asked if we knew that we were potentially signing students up to commit felonies," Juliana told me—by registering out-of-state students to vote in Arizona. When Kelly then asserted that Arizona law requires only that those registering be resident in the state twenty-nine days before the election, Natalie Tejeda, the Fox reporter, insisted it was illegal to register students. On the news that night, student voter registration was the crime du jour:

> **Tejeda:** What many don't realize is that legally, students from out of state aren't eligible to vote in Arizona because they're considered temporary residents.
>
> **Chris Roads** [Pima County Registrar's office]**:** If they are only here to attend school and their intention is to immediately return to where they came from when school is over then they are not residents of the state of Arizona for voting purposes and they cannot register to vote here.
>
> **Tejeda:** ...Those caught misrepresenting their residency can face a severe punishment.
>
> **Roads:** The form in Arizona is an affidavit; it is a felony offense if you are lying on that form.
>
> **Tejeda:** So how easy is it to get caught? Well, starting this past January all voter applications are cross-checked with the Motor Vehicles Department and Social Security Administration. If they find that you are falsifying your residency you could be prosecuted. At this time we don't know if anybody has yet been indicted, but Roads says one of the easiest things you can do to avoid all that is simply go online or pick up the phone, call your home state's elections office and ask for an absentee ballot.
>
> **Anchor:** Better to be safe on that one. Thanks, Natalie.

Misguided youth or hardened criminals? They report, you decide.

When an urgent e-mail from UA professor Laura Briggs about the Fox broadcast flashed across my screen a few days later, I assumed that such an egregious example of voter intimidation by proxy—with GOP TV standing in for, well, the GOP—would be all over the media by the time my next column deadline rolled around, so I passed on it. Silly me. As I write three weeks later, almost nothing has appeared outside the local press. The silence persisted even after the Feminist Majority—which had spearheaded the students' drive as part of its Get Out Her Vote campaign—held a press conference to publicize the incident. In those three weeks, how many stories have you read bemoaning the apathy of youth, and in particular the fecklessness of young women too "busy" shoe shopping and barhopping to focus on the election?

In fact, despite a 1979 Supreme Court ruling affirming their right to vote where they attend school, students often encounter difficulties when they try to exercise that right. A recent Harvard survey of 249 colleges and universities found that more than one-third weren't complying with the law requiring them to help students register and vote. What's more, local and state officials have tried to prevent students from registering or voting at William and Mary, the University of New Hampshire, Skidmore, Hamilton and Henderson State University in Arkansas, among others. Students at predominantly African-American Prairie View A&M in Waller County, Texas, were threatened with prosecution if they voted without "a legal voting address" by the District Attorney in a series of letters to the local paper. Strangely enough, it was earlier attempts to suppress the vote of Prairie View students that prompted the Supreme Court's 1979 ruling.

When I spoke to Chris Roads, the official quoted in Tejeda's story—yes, he's a Republican—he claimed that Fox had quoted him out of context. His mention of "felony" was originally addressed to a "hypothetical" posed by Tejeda: What would he say to someone who planned to flat-out lie—who said, "I don't live here, can I fill out the form?" Roads says he was "shocked when it blossomed into a story about prosecuting people" for registering—in fact, he told me, no one has ever been prosecuted in Arizona over residency requirements. What is residency, exactly? "Residency means you intend to remain," he went on.

"So it's a subjective thing?" I asked. "You look into your heart?"

"That's right," he said. "You look into your heart."

Roads is a genial man and I enjoyed our chat. Like "intend," "remain" turns out to be a verb as flexible in meaning for registrars as "is" was for Bill Clinton, and don't get him started on "resident"! But despite demands from the students and from Feminist Majority, he did not publicly clarify his comments on Fox News. That was left to his boss, F. Ann Rodriguez, a Democrat, who finally stated on September 9 that out-of-state students may vote. Fox has not only failed to correct its original report; it has continued to suggest on the air that out-of-state students who register in Arizona are breaking the law and could end up in big trouble. And the state bureaucracy is still providing misleading or confusing information: When *Nation* intern Raina Lipsitz called the Arizona Secretary of State's office to ask if an out-of-state student may vote, she was repeatedly told that she couldn't register in two states at once and, finally, that she should read the statute herself.

The young feminists have done a wonderful job of publicizing the right of students to register and vote. They've held a press conference and reached out to the community, Democratic lawmakers and other student groups. Even the young Republicans—whose registration efforts down the mall from the young feminists were ignored by Fox—have supported them. Juliana and Kelly are now hard at work planning their next registration drive. They're calling it STILL Getting Out Her Vote. ■

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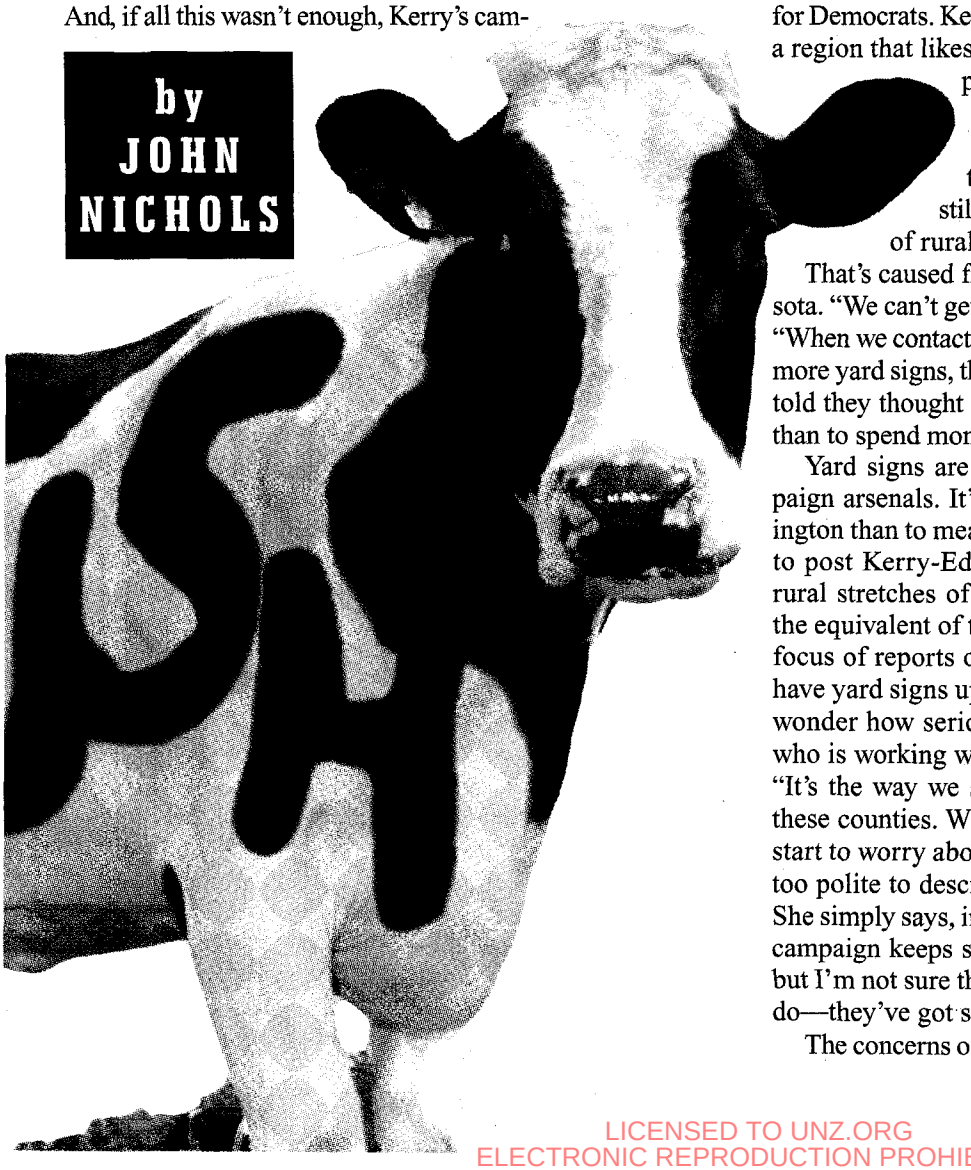
ARTICLES

JOHN KERRY'S FARM PROBLEM

by JOHN NICHOLS



John Kerry should be reaping votes in the Upper Midwest as easily as a farmer harvesting a bumper crop on the best day of Indian Summer. Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa rejected George W. Bush's candidacy in 2000, just as they have every GOP presidential contender since 1988. Most of the complaints about the Bush Administration that are heard across the United States go double for the trio of battleground states that may very well determine whether Kerry or Bush prevails on November 2. The economic downturn during Bush's first term hit the Upper Midwest hard, with states losing tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs and long-suffering farmers finding it increasingly difficult to get a fair price for their goods. Concerns about Bush's war in Iraq are mounting across a region that has a long history of discomfort with military adventurism, and that is starting to see too many caskets returning to too many small towns. And, if all this wasn't enough, Kerry's campaign and the Democratic National Committee claim to be working harder than ever to win the rural counties that are the swing regions of the swing states.

But Kerry is running into trouble in the Upper Midwest. No one is quite sure where he stands on the war. When he talks about wanting to protect American jobs, he does so with all the enthusiasm of the free trader he has always been. His campaign has failed to make effective use of John Edwards, whose performance in the primaries suggested that he should be popular in areas where Kerry isn't. And there's a sense that the Kerry campaign is playing defense when it needs to be mounting a more aggressive challenge to a powerful and, in many areas, personally popular President.

To be sure, most of these concerns are echoed far beyond the cafes, union halls and farm cooperatives of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa. But there are particular problems in the Upper Midwest that have made this a difficult season for Democrats. Kerry's hunt-club style has been all wrong for a region that likes its Democratic politics served up with a populist edge. And, even where grassroots activists are ready to save Kerry from himself, they complain that they cannot get the support they need from a campaign that still has a hard time understanding the politics of rural America.

That's caused frustration in places like Wabasha, Minnesota. "We can't get any yard signs," complains Sarah Farkas. "When we contacted the Kerry campaign and said we needed more yard signs, they said they didn't print enough. We were told they thought it was more important to be on television than to spend money on yard signs."

Yard signs are not much discussed in reviews of campaign arsenals. It's easier to chart media buys from Washington than to measure the extent to which folks are willing to post Kerry-Edwards signs in their front yards. But in rural stretches of the Upper Midwest, yard-sign wars are the equivalent of the televised air wars that are so often the focus of reports on the campaign. "Out here, if you don't have yard signs up well before the election, people start to wonder how serious your campaign is," says Elfi Baltes, who is working with Farkas to promote Kerry in Wabasha. "It's the way we show we're serious about competing for these counties. When people don't see the yard signs, they start to worry about how the campaign is going." Farkas is too polite to describe the Kerry campaign as boneheaded. She simply says, in her "Minnesota nice" voice, "The Kerry campaign keeps saying how important rural Minnesota is, but I'm not sure they get it. And I'm afraid the Bush people do—they've got signs everywhere. I'm worried."

The concerns of the women in Wabasha are echoed every-

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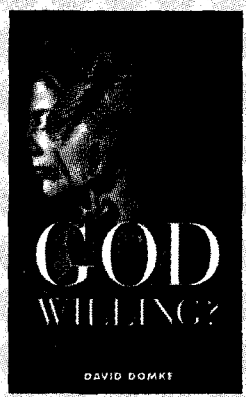

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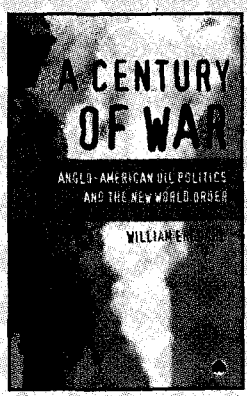

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where across the Upper Midwest, but they are heard loudest in the rural counties, where Kerry will win or lose the region. "In terms of a coordinated rural outreach effort, the Kerry campaign is behind the curve," says Niel Ritchie, executive director of the League of Rural Voters. That's a very dangerous place to be. Kerry aides quietly admit they have a hard time plotting a realistic course that gets them to the White House without a strong showing in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa, whose combined total of electoral votes—twenty-seven—equals the electoral votes of Florida. Yet polls generally show that all three states are competitive, with Kerry a bit ahead in Minnesota, about even in Iowa and a bit behind in Wisconsin—a state some pundits have slipped into the "Leans Bush" category.

It wasn't supposed to be this way. Kerry went into this campaign with some genuine advantages in the Upper Midwest, including the fact that people in the region tend to prefer that their Presidents be Democrats. While rural America as a whole has been trending toward the GOP in the past three election cycles—Bush beat Al Gore by twenty-two points in rural America in 2000, and Democrats were badly battered there in 2002—the Mississippi River counties in Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota have remained relatively solid for the party of Roosevelt and Truman. On those 2000 maps that showed vast stretches of the heartland colored red for Bush, for the most part these Mississippi Riverfront regions remained blue for Gore. This break in pattern was credited by Democrats with providing Gore's narrow margins of victory in Iowa (where he won by 4,144 votes), Wisconsin (5,708 votes) and Minnesota (58,607 votes). While the role that these river counties played in the 2000 contest was little noted outside the region at the time, it has become something of a national obsession this year. The Bush and Kerry campaigns, the Democratic and Republican national committees and their surrogates have lavished attention on the region. Communities like Lancaster, Wisconsin, population 4,070, which rarely saw presidential candidates in the past, can boast of having welcomed both contenders this year.

The intense attention reflects a shift in the political dynamic of a year when Democrats thought they had the upper hand. As the 2004 campaign got started, there was much hopeful talk about augmenting the party's traditional strength with votes from the burgeoning Latino population in rural regions where the demographics are rapidly shifting. Between 1990 and 2000 the number of residents of all three states who claim Hispanic heritage skyrocketed—from 53,884 to 143,382 in Minnesota alone. Many live in rural areas, where they've found jobs in agriculture-related industries. Because Latinos in the Upper Midwest have historically leaned Democratic, these demographic shifts were seen as advantageous news for Kerry. And the campaign seemed poised to capitalize on this and other opportunities.

After securing the Democratic nomination, the Kerry campaign made some smart moves. The selection of Edwards represented a bow to the party's rural base. The same goes for the naming of John Norris, a veteran Iowa strategist, as the national campaign's field director. Norris and other Democratic aides who know their way around the region quickly got the candidate on a schedule that has had him showing up several times each week in the Upper Midwest. Kerry's campaign has been pumping out good position papers about farm policy, rural transportation, education

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and healthcare that pinpoint the ways in which the Bush Administration has failed the region. And Kerry's best surrogate, Iowa Senator Tom Harkin—who says, "The potential is there this year, as never before, for rural America to determine the outcome of this election"—is traveling the region with a populist "Bush won't, Kerry will" rap on issues of concern to small-town voters.

At the same time, developments in what should be the big issues of this campaign tended to favor Kerry—particularly with regard to the war in Iraq. The Bush Administration has relied heavily on National Guard units from the Upper Midwest to maintain the occupation, and that has not been popular. "Everywhere I've gone, I've heard people complaining about the war. There's a lot of frustration out there, because when someone from a small town is killed in Iraq, it hits people hard," says Amanda Ballantyne, an Iowa native who is organizing rural voter registration and turnout initiatives. "Everybody knows everybody, so they feel the loss. And they ask questions: How did we get into this mess? Why are we still there?"

There's an almost equal level of frustration with the economy. The deindustrialization of the Upper Midwest, driven by Bush-backed trade and tax policies that are seen as having encouraged the shuttering of midsized factories and small machine shops across the region, has hit hardest in rural communities. "When a factory shuts in one of these towns, you can't just walk down the street and get a job someplace else. Most of these towns only have one or two employers. When they're gone, you've got to go thirty, forty miles to find something else," says Arlene Siss, chair of the Grant County Democratic Party in southwest Wisconsin. "A lot of times, the 'something else' in that next town is laying off as well."

All this added up to trouble for Bush in the late spring and early summer. A June poll commissioned by the nonpartisan Center for Rural Strategies found that Bush was leading Kerry by only nine points, 51–42, in the rural portions of the seventeen states then considered to be presidential election battlegrounds. That made Kerry's position two points better than Gore's at the close of the 2000 race, and internal surveys suggested Kerry was doing even better in the rural areas of Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

By the time of the Democratic National Convention, Kerry operatives were enthusiastically talking up the notion that their man might restore the glory days of the 1980s and early '90s for the Democratic Party in the Upper Midwest, when its candidates were surging in the rural vote in key regions, enabling populist Democrats like Iowa's Harkin, Minnesota's Paul Wellstone and Wisconsin's Russ Feingold to win Senate seats from Republicans. "This year, rural voters are dissatisfied with George Bush, so these are new votes for Kerry and the Democratic Party," Norris announced at a gathering of the party's Rural Caucus.

This fall, however, after an ugly August that saw more media attention paid to Kerry's Swift Boat service in Vietnam than to his stands on trade policy and rural healthcare, Kerry backers are not nearly so confident. In addition to Kerry's lack of clarity on the war and his inability to craft a compelling message on economic issues, his style on the stump has proven ineffective and his campaign has failed to figure out how to connect with rural voters. Too often, Kerry and his aides seem to be using the region and its residents as a backdrop for photo opportunities. His

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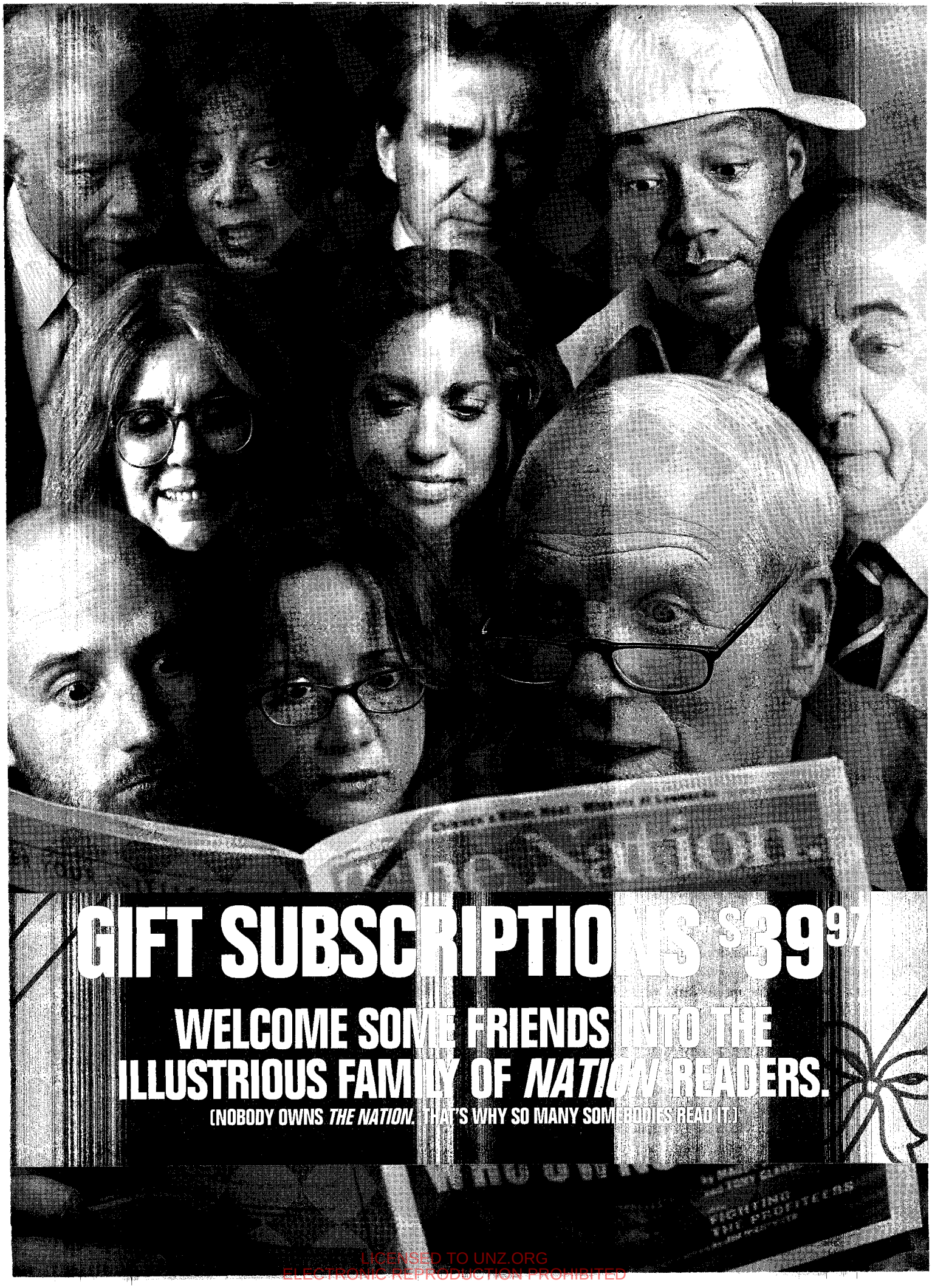
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"events" are frequently small and often require a ticket to gain entry. When Kerry passed through Wisconsin's Grant County in July, his aides told local Democrats not to promote his stop in the county seat too aggressively. "They said they didn't want too big a crowd because they might attract protesters," recalls Arlene Siss. "It was just ridiculous. They spent so much time worrying about making everything look right that they missed the chance to reach a lot more people than they did."

When Bush passed through Lancaster and other communities in southwest Wisconsin in early May, he was greeted by large crowds that had been drawn out by an exceptionally aggressive advance operation that does not hesitate to suggest shuttering local schools so students can meet the President. Bush, who delights in stump campaigning in small towns, gave quick speeches and then waded into the crowds, tossing around nicknames, posing for snapshots and generally enjoying himself. Some of the pictures of the President campaigning in Lancaster were so compelling that they ended up on the front of literature being distributed throughout the state. Kerry's stop in Lancaster a few weeks later, by comparison, was a lifeless affair. He gave no speech. He just walked along a rope line for a few minutes, shook some hands and then hopped back on the bus.

Even Kerry's "impromptu stops" are choreographed so precisely that the spontaneity is squeezed out of them. Perhaps worst of all, Kerry seems to be trying too hard. Almost weekly, he is photographed shooting a gun, in an attempt to counter the concerns of rural male voters about past Democratic support for gun control. But images of Kerry shooting skeet in a button-down shirt do about as much for his man-of-the-people image as those pictures of him windsurfing off Nantucket. According to Bush media strategist Mark McKinnon, "People see Kerry as a big-city Northeastern senator who has no clue about rural voters." McKinnon has told reporters that in focus-group sessions the Bush campaign organized, "We asked voters, 'How many of you can imagine George Bush filling up his own car at the gas station?' Half the respondents said they could see that happening. We asked them the same about Kerry. Not a single person thought they could see John Kerry filling up his car."

'There are still a lot of people who are uncomfortable with Bush...but who aren't comfortable with Kerry either.' —Nancy Falkum

The selection of the congenial, "born in a small town" Edwards as Kerry's running mate was supposed to correct for Kerry's weaknesses in the "filling up his car" department. But Edwards has seemed constrained ever since joining the ticket; his mix of populist concern about the growing gap between "two Americas" and optimism about Democrats' ability to narrow that gap, which played so well in rural areas during the primary season, has been muted. And his campaigning in rural areas since the convention has often felt as stilted as Kerry's. Over the Labor Day weekend, for instance, he was appearing at small, front-porch photo-op events in Wisconsin rather than making the traditional circuit of union parades and picnics, where he could have roused the faithful. Bush did not make the same mistake. He swept into the state at the same time for a rally of 15,000 cheering backers at Wisconsin's State Fair Park.

Along with making good use of their candidate, the Bush campaign is covering its bases by stirring up social issues that play well for Republicans in rural areas. Bush's endorsement of a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage was calculated to stir concern about the Democrats among voters who might otherwise be drawn to Kerry. And the scheme may well succeed; in Missouri in August, a ballot proposal to amend the state Constitution to bar marriages between gay and lesbian couples won 71–29 statewide, but in some rural counties it secured the backing of close to 90 percent of voters. No such referendums are on the ballot in Minnesota, Wisconsin or Iowa, but the issue is being worked hard as part of a Karl Rove–devised campaign to increase turnout among evangelical Christians. So, too, with the abortion issue, which is a big deal in Mississippi River counties with large socially conservative Catholic and Lutheran populations.

So is Kerry finished in the Upper Midwest? Not necessarily. But he doesn't have much time. Democrats across the region have plenty of advice, starting with "Let loose." "He should just get rid of the prepared speeches and the prepared answers and speak from the heart," says Sarah Farkas. "He shouldn't stop and think about how to answer every little question. He should just answer directly, bluntly." Asks Elfi Baltes, "Why is Kerry not listing the terrible things that Bush has done in Iraq, the terrible mistakes this Administration has made?" Her friend Claire Hall, who lives on a farm outside Wabasha, adds, "People are very discouraged about the war. There are a lot of military families out here. There's a lot of National Guard families. People don't know when their husbands and sons and wives and sisters are coming home. They're worried sick. They want to hear Kerry talk about the war a lot more." Organizer Amanda Ballantyne says people need to hear more economic populism in Kerry's speeches. "I feel like people are desperate to hear Kerry talking about taking their side—on farm issues, manufacturing issues, yes, but just in general. People just want to be thrown a bone—so they're confident that their issues will be addressed. I don't think it takes that much, but it's more than they've gotten from Kerry so far."

Thirty miles east of St. Paul, where the outer-ring suburbs of the Twin Cities give way to rolling farm fields, a huge homemade sign with blue block letters on a white background shouts SUPPORT OUR PRESIDENT BUSH. Scrawled across the President's name in equally large red letters is the word "Liar." The defaced sign neatly sums up the intensity of the race to win the votes of rural regions of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa. When I mentioned the defaced Bush sign to a Democratic activist in northern Wisconsin, however, she sighed and said, "Just because they wrote 'Liar' on a Bush sign doesn't mean they'll vote for Kerry. That's the problem we've got." Over at the Book Cliffs used bookstore in Wabasha, Nancy Falkum says, "There are still a lot of people who are uncomfortable with Bush, either because of the war or the economy, but who aren't comfortable with Kerry either." She adds,"We were talking about it at the coffee shop the other morning and some woman said, almost resigned, 'Oh, I guess I'll just vote for Bush.' Someone else said, 'You can't do that.' She asked, 'Why not?' I guess Kerry's got to answer that question." ■

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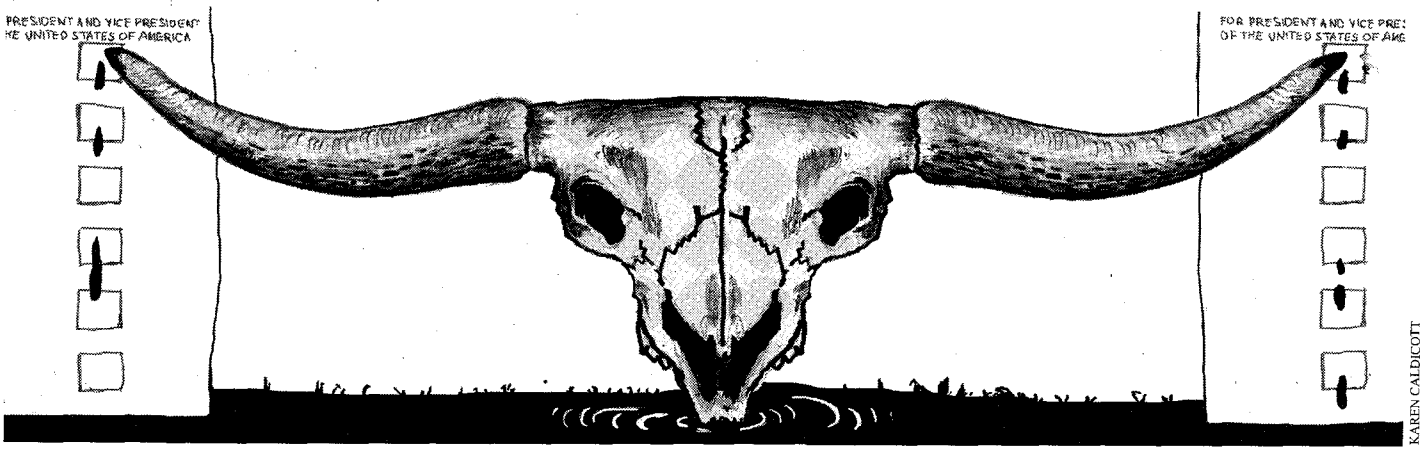

KAREN CALDICOTT

Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch

EYAL PRESS

Linn Blancett pulls his pickup truck to a stop and lets out a weary sigh. "You see that area there," he says, pointing to a patch of land that borders a well pad pumping out gas, the surface once covered with grass now bare. "That's supposed to be reseeded." We are in the northwest corner of New Mexico, a few miles from the Colorado border, in the heart of the San Juan Basin, a bowl-shaped, 7,500-square-mile expanse that sits atop one of the largest natural-gas reserves in the country. Linn Blancett and his wife, Tweeti, have been running cattle here for much of their lives. Their ranch stretches across 32,000 acres of mostly federal land, hilly, high-desert terrain where the Blancetts first settled as homesteaders six generations ago, back in the 1870s.

On this morning, though, several hours into our trek across the range, we've yet to spot any cattle. What we have seen plenty of are roads, pipelines and drilling rigs. Such oil and gas activity generates millions of dollars in profits for companies like Burlington and British Petroleum—and may be reshaping the politics of the Rocky Mountain West in ways that will reverberate in the presidential election this fall.

At the heart of the controversy lies a drilling method known as coal-bed methane extraction, a technique pioneered in the late 1980s that enables companies to suck natural gas out of the coal seams that lie buried beneath the San Juan Basin and other formations. Beginning under the Clinton Administration, the federal government pushed to expand production of this comparatively clean-burning fossil fuel, although Clinton also protected millions of acres of public land from drilling. The Bush Administration, by contrast, has called for removing all "restrictions and impediments" on domestic development, code language for opening dozens of pristine natural habitats to unfettered leasing.

It's a policy that has pleased industry but antagonized a growing chorus of ranchers, hunters and property owners, people who tend to be politically conservative yet find themselves making alliances with strange bedfellows—Native American groups, environmental organizations—in a common effort to protect their livelihoods and land. Natural gas may be relatively clean to burn, these critics note, but getting it out of the ground wreaks havoc on the environment in other ways. For one thing, accessing the gas trapped in coal seams requires companies to pump millions of gallons of water out of the ground, depleting aquifers and bringing to the surface huge amounts of sodium-laden waste water that can destroy vegetation. Drilling on the scale now taking place in the West, moreover, can cause erosion and surface disturbances that will permanently scar the landscape of one of the nation's most spectacular regions and poses a long-term threat to livestock and wildlife.

A tour of the Blancett ranch underscores the problems. At several of the wells where we stop, tanks dripping ethylene glycol (antifreeze) have not been properly fenced, leaving a toxic stew from which cattle can drink—and die. At others, barrels have not been netted. Trucks hurtle past us on roads that seem to be everywhere. Roads built too wide have destroyed vegetation in some areas; pipelines have not been reseeded in others. There are places where the ground is stained black from overspray and other byproducts that are less visible but potentially more hazardous. Emissions from the more than 400 wells on the Blancett allotment contribute to the estimated 6,900 tons of volatile organic compounds and 29,000 tons of nitrogen oxide that the oil and gas industry emits in San Juan County each year, creating surface ozone levels close to the EPA's maximum allowable standards.

Two years ago, the Blancetts locked the gates on the wells situated on their private land in a show of protest. It did little good since, throughout the West, companies can still obtain leases from the government for the mineral rights, a policy that dates back to the 1920 Mineral Leasing Act. It's a system that has left landown-

Eyal Press is a Nation *contributing writer.*

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Nader 2000 Leaders United To Defeat Bush

We, the undersigned, were selected by Ralph Nader to be members of his 113-person national "Nader 2000 Citizens Committee." This year, we urge support for Kerry/Edwards in all "swing states," even while we strongly disagree with Kerry's policies on Iraq and other issues. For people seeking progressive social change in the United States, removing George W. Bush from office should be the top priority in the 2004 presidential election. Progressive votes for John Kerry in swing states may prove decisive in attaining this vital goal.

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Juliette Beck
California Citizens for Fair Trade

Herbert Bernstein
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Wendell Berry
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Theresa Bonpane
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Eric Brakken
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Ira Byock
Palliative Care Physician, Author of Dying Well

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Barbara Dudley
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ers feeling increasingly powerless—and furious at what they view as a violation of their right to decide what happens on the property they own. By the time I visited, contractors for the oil and gas industry had broken open the gates to the Blancett property so traffic could once again flow through.

Earlier that morning, before we headed out, I asked Linn Blancett how all the activity had affected him. "It's destroying my way of life," he said. A soft-spoken man with a no-nonsense manner who told me he never wanted to be anything but a rancher—as a child, he used to receive a calf on his birthday each year as a gift from his grandfather—Blancett has only eight cows, eight calves and a bull remaining. He sold off the rest of his cattle last fall to avoid watching his livestock struggle to survive on what he no longer feels is viable grazing land.

"This ranch should be my grandchildren's legacy," he said with a hard-bitten look. "I can't run cattle on it anymore."

But the Blancetts, like many Western ranchers, are not taking the Bush Administration's policies lying down. Earlier this year, after the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued a Resource Management Plan authorizing the creation of nearly 10,000 new oil and gas wells on public land in the San Juan Basin—where an estimated 19,000 producing wells already exist—Tweeti filed suit against Gale Norton and the Interior Department, accusing the government of failing to balance resource extraction with conservation, recreation and other uses of federal land. Among the other plaintiffs in the suit are the Natural Resources Defense Council, several Navajo Indian chapters—who say they were never consulted about the drilling plans—and the San Juan Citizens Alliance, a watchdog group based in nearby Durango, Colorado.

Ranchers say they find it odd to be allied with environmentalists, but they see the oil and gas industry as a common threat.

None of the plaintiffs claim that extracting coal-bed methane gas, which is used to heat millions of American homes each year, is an inappropriate use of public land. But under federal law, they note, the BLM is supposed to balance this objective with the interests of other users (hunters, ranchers) and insure that drilling is done in a way that does not wreak havoc on a precious public resource of value to all. "The federal lands that we have in the West are all of our heritage, all of our legacy," says Tweeti Blancett, a feisty woman who has turned this issue into a personal crusade, and who is convinced the entire Rocky Mountain West will soon look like her ranch if landowners don't fight back. "What's happened here will happen throughout the American West if we don't get the public to understand the issues."

Coming from, say, a member of the Sierra Club, such a statement might not be terribly surprising—and would likely be ignored by Republicans, who long ago conceded the vote of avid environmentalists to Democrats. But Tweeti is no card-carrying Green. Four years ago, she not only voted for George W. Bush but served as the co-chair of his campaign in San Juan County, an area of New Mexico that is heavily Republican and crucial to the President's hopes of winning this hotly contested swing state in November.

One week after my visit, Bush showed up in the town of Farmington for a campaign rally and called on his supporters to make sure turnout among New Mexican Republicans is high. This time around, Tweeti won't be helping out, having seen how little her voice counted next to that of the Bush Administration's corporate friends. "I was naïve enough to think if I took the pictures to Washington, showed them the problems on our land and we all sat down, we could work on it," she says. In fact, Tweeti did meet directly both with Kathleen Clarke, head of the BLM, and Rebecca Watson, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Land and Minerals Management, as well as with the White House's Council on Environmental Quality. She showed them the pictures and explained the devastating impact of unfettered drilling. "They were very polite, they were very attentive," she says, "and when I walked out the door they probably said, 'What a waste of time.'"

These days, she says, members of the Bush Administration don't even return her calls. "What I didn't factor in is the dollar sign, the billions," she concludes. "They were not going to listen to me over the largest industry on the face of the earth and the billions of dollars they generate."

It's a feeling ranchers in other parts of the West are beginning to share. In south-central New Mexico, along the border with Texas, a coalition of hunters, ranchers and conservationists has formed to oppose drilling in the Otero Mesa, a spectacular stretch of desert grassland that, with its pronghorn antelope, mule deer and array of migratory songbirds, is popular with hunters and environmentalists alike. The BLM would like to open 90 percent of the federal land in this pristine habitat to energy development, a plan opposed by groups ranging from the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance to the Paragon Foundation, a conservative property-rights organization. "We'd like it kept as it is," says Bob Jones, the foundation's president and a rancher.

Like the Blancetts, Jones finds it odd to be allied with environmentalists but sees the oil and gas industry as a common threat. "They trash the country terribly," he says of industry, "and if you're a rancher, it destroys a lot of your grass and turf and makes it awful hard to live in the middle of it." Also like the Blancetts, Jones believes the Bush Administration's policies risk alienating many of its allies in the West. "The rural areas are what elected George W. Bush," he says. "He needs to pay some attention to some of them or he will lose their votes. They may not vote for John Kerry, but they also may not vote at all."

Just how politically sensitive this issue is in the West became evident two years ago in Wyoming, where Democrat Dave Freudenthal defeated Republican Eli Bebout, an oil and gas developer, in part by vowing to balance energy interests with the rights of landowners. Wyoming is a conservative state, but it is also home to the Powder River Basin, an 8-million-acre expanse of rugged prairie that stretches into Montana, and that the BLM would like to turn into the largest coal-bed methane production site in the country. In April of 2002, after the BLM authorized drilling 51,000 new wells in the Wyoming part of the basin, the EPA reviewed the draft environmental study for the plan and deemed it "environmentally unsatisfactory." In response, J. Steven Griles, the Deputy Secretary of the Interior Department,

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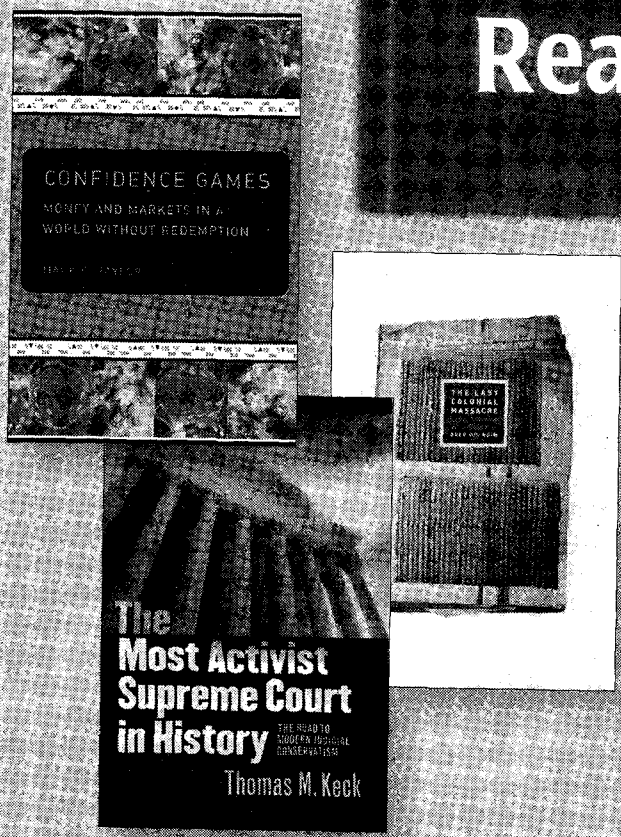
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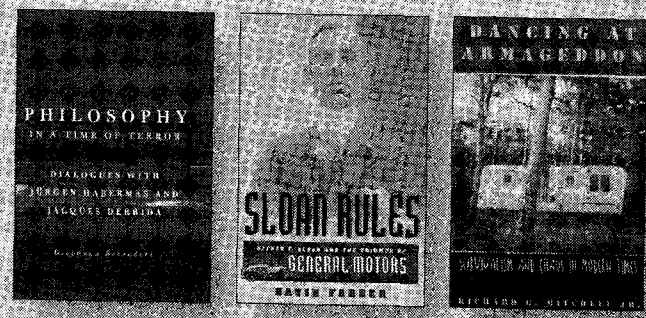

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wrote a memo pressuring the EPA to change its analysis. A former lobbyist for more than forty oil, gas and electric companies, Griles has met repeatedly with past clients while in office, despite having signed a recusal agreement requiring him to avoid "any particular matter involving specific parties in which any of my former clients is or represents a party." (Friends of the Earth and other groups have called for Griles to step down, to no avail.)

Oil and gas drilling "is a huge issue out here," says Jill Morrison of the Powder River Basin Resource Council, an organization founded by ranchers and landowners several decades ago to rein in coal strip-mining in the region. The council's focus today is coal-bed methane extraction, whose primary waste product is water. Already, according to Morrison, 1–2 million barrels of water get pumped out every day in the Powder River Basin on a mere 12,000 producing wells, a sensitive issue in a state as arid as Wyoming. "This is water that comes from aquifers people use, so ranchers and farmers are losing their water wells," she says. "The second problem is that companies are discharging this water to the surface, and it's killing the native vegetation because it has a high sodium content."

The frustration among ranchers and farmers creates an opportunity for Kerry to outline an energy policy that considers their interests.

This past March, Marjorie West, a rancher from Wyoming, appeared before the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works and described how coal-bed methane drilling had disrupted her life to the point that her husband had to start taking high-blood-pressure medication to deal with the stress. The drilling cut off the water supply from three artesian wells on their private land. Meanwhile, a nearby creek was flooded with waste water so loaded with sodium that it destroyed vegetation and 200 cottonwood trees lining the creek. "Our lives have been turned upside down, our health has deteriorated and we spend our days fighting with companies," West told the Senate. "We no longer have time for the ranching and farming that was our way of life."

West added that her experience was "not isolated. There are many landowners who have lost water wells or had companies come on their land without an agreement, building roads and well pads or discharging water that has killed soil and vegetation." In fact, two days after touring the Blancett allotment, I met with a rancher named Ron Burkett, who lost an artesian well on his land when a pipeline built by a company disrupted the flow. Burkett's 4,000-acre cattle ranch in southern Colorado looks fairly isolated from afar—you have to drive several miles along dusty back roads to get there—but the closer you get, the more you notice the gas wells connected by pipelines that crisscross the terrain. Although the entire ranch is privately owned, Burkett doesn't control the subsurface rights, and companies can now drill wells every 160 acres (the old rule was every 320 acres). "When they start doing this, especially on the scale that they're doing it on us, it's like suddenly instead of living out in the middle of nowhere with all the wildlife and quietude and so on, you're living in an industrial zone," says Burkett. "I can hear four gas wells pumping water from my house, and there's activity going by every day."

What most angers ranchers like the Blancetts is not that drilling is taking place but that, despite the scale of operations and the immense profits being generated, the oil and gas industry is not held accountable for unfenced pits or other negligent behavior. It is instead allowed to police itself. "There are two on-ground BLM inspectors for all the wells in San Juan County," says Tweeti. "Do the math. There's no way they can monitor whether industry is following the rules." Steve Henke, head of the BLM's Farmington office, which oversees the Blancett allotment and much of the San Juan Basin, maintains that the system is working fine. "We have a program to achieve compliance" with federal standards to minimize adverse impacts, he told me. "It can range from an inspector making personal verbal contact [with a company], to a written order, to an incident of noncompliance, to a fine up to and including the suspension of operation on a lease." I asked Henke how many leases had been suspended on the 19,000 wells in the Farmington area during the past year. He could not recall a single one. Did he really have enough inspectors to insure that industry followed the rules and respected other land users? "I think I do," he said. Sherrie Landon, one of the two on-ground inspectors employed by the BLM, happened to drop by when I was meeting with Tweeti. She offered a different view. "There's just so much to do out there, and we have a hard time just keeping up with the new disturbances," Landon told me. "It's so busy, and they're drilling so many more [wells]."

The rising frustration among ranchers and farmers, who increasingly view the Bush Administration as the handmaiden of oil and gas interests, presents an opportunity for John Kerry: to outline an energy policy that will balance oil and gas development with their interests. Calling for limits on the density of wells and the scale of development, for a halt to leasing in sensitive habitats and for companies to be held accountable to higher standards—in Wyoming, for example, industry could be required to re-inject all the waste water back into the ground—would hardly leave Americans suddenly starved of natural gas. As David Alberswerth of the Wilderness Society notes, the BLM itself has acknowledged that fully 88 percent of the natural gas on federal land is already available for development under current land-use prescriptions. The recent push by industry, aided and abetted by an Administration only too happy to smooth the path, is simply a product of greed, Alberswerth contends.

Kerry has indicated that he favors limits on drilling in Otero Mesa, which, according to a poll conducted by New Mexico–based Research & Polling, is the approach preferred by 64 percent of the state's registered voters (and 47 percent of Republicans). His energy plan, however, is vague on details and calls for expanding natural gas supplies without addressing the concerns of ranchers like the Blancetts. On the day I visited, Tweeti Blancett was busy drafting a memo that a friend of hers had said he would pass along to Kerry's advisers. "There is a large block of votes in the West that is undecided," the memo began. "We have heard neither party address the rush to drill for oil and gas without regard for the other

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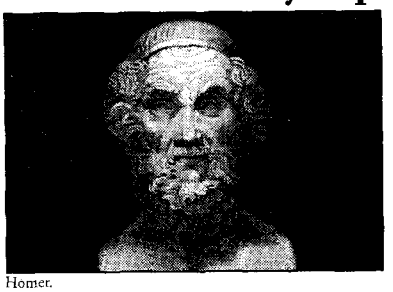

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Professor Elizabeth Vandiver, formerly of the University of Maryland, became Assistant Professor of Classics at Whitman College in 2004. She earned her M.A. and Ph.D. from The University of Texas at Austin. Her awards include the prestigious American Philological Association's Excellence in Teaching Award.

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users of the land.... WE WANT SOMEBODY TO STAND UP FOR THE LEGACY OF THE WEST."

Tweeti smiled evasively when I asked whom she was planning to vote for this fall. "I'm not committing," she said. "I want to see something from these boys that concerns the West. I would like [Kerry] to take a stand—either one of them to take a stand—and say, 'Industry will comply with the existing regulations. Industry will be held responsible.'" ■

WHEN THE BUSHES NEED A FIXER, THEY TURN TO JAMES BAKER III. HE AND HIS FIRM BENEFIT.

It's a Baker Botts World

ROBERT BRYCE

The induction of George W. Bush into the Texas crony network can be traced to a precise date: June 6, 1962. On that date, the gregarious 15-year-old went to work in the mailroom of Houston's oldest and most prestigious law firm, Baker Botts.

KAREN CALDICOTT

Four decades later, the financial/political symbiosis between the Bushes and Baker Botts is stronger than ever. Indeed, no law firm in America has profited more from its association with the two Bush Administrations than Baker Botts. Much of that influence stems from the firm's patriarch, the silver-maned, silver-tongued former Secretary of State, James A. Baker III. And now that Baker has joined George W. Bush's campaign—he is leading the negotiations with the Kerry campaign on the presidential debates—it's assured that he and a battalion of Baker Botts barristers are ready to man the ramparts in the event of another Florida recount scenario.

Nearly four years have passed since Baker stridently proclaimed that "the vote in Florida has been counted and then recounted. Governor George W. Bush was the winner of the vote. He was also the winner of the recount." It scarcely matters now that Baker's statement wasn't true: When Baker made that pronouncement, on November 11, 2000, the recount had not even begun in two of the four counties the Gore campaign had targeted. The important thing was that Baker stuck to the script. He also kept the entire Bush legal team—which included several Baker Botts lawyers—focused and determined to win at all costs. Shortly after Bush prevailed at the US Supreme Court in 2000, Baker told an interviewer, "I think all this talk about legitimacy is way overblown."

James A. Baker III has never doubted that the Bushes deserve to live in the White House. Their ties go back to the 1950s, when George H.W. Bush met Baker on the tennis courts at the Houston Country Club. At about the same time, Baker Botts began handling the legal work for Bush's company, Zapata Petroleum. It was a reasonable choice: Baker Botts is the second-oldest law firm west of the Mississippi. And since its founding, it has consistently represented the looters, polluters and plutocrats. Baker's great-grandfather Judge James A. Baker made his reputation by representing the infamous railroad robber baron Jay Gould, the man who tried to corner the gold market in 1869. Gould's shenanigans led to "Black Friday," when gold prices collapsed, financial panic ensued and the reputation of President Ulysses S. Grant, who had been duped by Gould, was ruined. After aligning itself with Gould, the law firm began specializing in railroad law. When oil began dominating Texas, Baker Botts began working for Big Oil.

In 1957 Baker was prevented from working at the law firm that employed his father, grandfather and great-grandfather thanks to the firm's new anti-nepotism rule, a policy adopted during his father's tenure. But the nepotism policy was rescinded when the newly out of work former Secretary of State returned to Houston. In fact, the firm welcomed him—at a salary reported to be $1 million per year. In addition to his job at Baker Botts, Baker also began selling his influence to select corporations. Just thirty-three days after Bill Clinton moved into the White House, Baker, in addition to his duties at Baker Botts, took a job lobbying for Enron in post-war Kuwait and elsewhere.

Baker's history in the diplomatic arena has apparently helped Baker Botts land a surfeit of lucrative international deals involving everything from Russian platinum and Caspian oil to representing Halliburton and the Saudi royal family. In the past few years, Baker Botts—which employs about 650 lawyers, has had annual revenues of about $365 million and operates offices in Austin, Baku, Dallas, London, Moscow, New York, Riyadh and Washington, DC—has become a major player in big international energy projects, on a par with much bigger international firms like White & Case and Baker & McKenzie.

As soon as George W. Bush got into the White House, a lawyer from a big international firm told me, Baker Botts went from "being a well-regarded firm with experience in the United States and Latin America to being everywhere." That near-omnipresence includes Russia, where it has snared some powerful clients. Last year, Baker Botts advised Russian mining giant Norilsk Nickel MMC in its purchase of Stillwater Mining Company, a Montana-based producer of palladium and platinum. Controlled by a secretive Russian oligarch named Vladimir Potanin, Norilsk faced obstacles at the Treasury Department and Federal Trade Commission. Treasury had to approve foreign purchases of strategic assets, and the FTC had to agree that Norilsk's purchase of Stillwater would not violate antitrust rules—even though it allowed

Robert Bryce, a contributing writer for the Texas Observer, *is the author of* Cronies: Oil, the Bushes, and the Rise of Texas, America's Superstate.

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the Russian firm to control more than 50 percent of the world's market for palladium and platinum. (The two are vital ingredients in both catalytic converters, which reduce pollution from automobiles, and in fuel cells, the pollution-free devices that turn hydrogen into electricity.)

Baker Botts convinced the Treasury Department to approve the deal in just one month. The FTC accelerated its approval process and gave the nod to the deal after just eight months. The speed of the approval left some FTC watchers agog. But then Baker Botts had good help. One of the lead lawyers on the deal was Diana Dietrich, who before working for the law firm had been a lead litigator in the FTC's antitrust division. It may be pure coincidence, but the FTC announced approval of the Norilsk deal on June 16, 2003, just one day before Baker gave a speech in Moscow on the importance of Russian-US relations. The event was co-hosted by the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy.

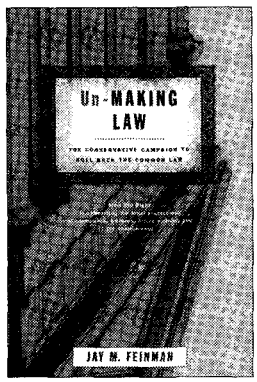
In 2003 Baker Botts advised Houston-based Marathon Oil on its acquisition of Khanty Mansiysk Oil Corporation, which produces oil in western Siberia. The law firm has also carved itself a foothold in the oil-rich Caspian Sea region. It was lead adviser to a consortium of oil companies that wrapped up a $3.5 billion finance package in February for one of the world's biggest energy projects, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline. Critical support for the pipeline came from two US government–backed agencies, the Export Import Bank and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation. The pipeline, which will carry 1 million barrels of oil a day from the Caspian to the Mediterranean, faced fierce opposition from environmental groups. But Baker Botts and the oil companies prevailed. Baker Botts lawyers wrote all the regulations governing the pipeline, overriding domestic laws, including the environmental policies of the nations of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey.

In a recent *Los Angeles Times* story, James A. Baker IV, the son of the former Secretary of State and a partner in the firm, was asked if Baker Botts's business in the Caspian was profiting from his father's connections. The younger Baker replied that his father had been "reserved in his business development activities, but it would be disingenuous to say it hasn't been an asset."

Over the past nine months, George W. Bush has been using the elder Baker as an asset. Last December, Bush appointed him to be his personal envoy on the matter of Iraq's huge foreign debt. Baker has been negotiating with several foreign governments, including the German and the French. But the key player in the Iraq debt sweepstakes is Saudi Arabia, which holds more Iraqi debt than any other country.

Baker has a long history in Riyadh. He started traveling there while he was Ronald Reagan's Treasury Secretary. As Secretary of State in the first Bush Administration, he was a regular visitor to the House of Saud. After that, Baker and the senior Bush both joined the Carlyle Group, a wealthy merchant bank, which has become something of a retirement haven for former conservative bigwigs, including Reagan Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci and former British Prime Minister John Major. In 1993 Baker joined Carlyle as an equity partner and senior counselor. Bush joined later on a consulting basis. One of the primary jobs that Baker and Bush had at Carlyle was raising cash—and they were particularly adept at getting it from the Saudis.

Taking Back the Issues



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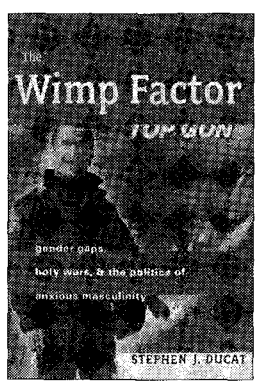

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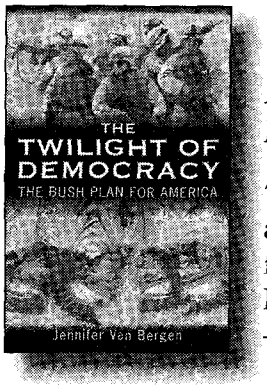

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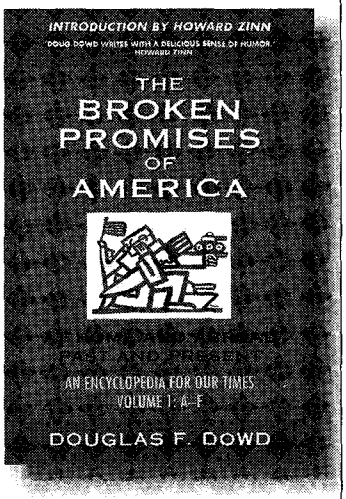

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Bush and Baker helped convince their pal and hunting buddy Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the longtime Saudi ambassador to the United States, to put money into Carlyle. Other Saudis who invested included two sons of the wealthy Saudi banker Khaled bin Mahfouz. A few million more came from the family of Osama bin Laden.

Baker doesn't like to discuss his business dealings. I caught up with him last fall at a high-dollar benefit at Rice University in Houston for the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy. (Prince Bandar gave $100,000 for the black-tie event, which raised millions for the Baker Institute). I asked Baker if a published report—which estimated that his stake in Carlyle was worth $180 million—was accurate. Irritated, he replied, "That's bullshit. You print that." When asked how much his Carlyle stake was worth, he replied, yelling, "That's for me to know and you to *not* know" and refused further questions. On August 12, his representative told me that Baker would not be available to answer questions for this article "due to his travel commitments."

Although Baker now works as an official representative of the United States, none of his personal financial information is available to taxpayers. That's because the White House has deemed him a "special government employee"—a status that shields his financial statements. It's up to the White House general counsel to determine if Baker has any conflicts of interest. Thus far, Bush Administration lawyers haven't found any—despite the fact that Baker Botts represents Exxon Mobil, ConocoPhillips and Occidental, all of which have major business interests in the Persian Gulf. Nor was it considered a conflict for Baker to be a partner in Carlyle. For its part, Baker Botts has said that Baker has forsworn his share of any partnership fees from firm activities that might pose a conflict with his job as debt envoy. In other words, Baker and his cronies are telling the world, "trust us."

Hugh Ray, a partner at the Houston law firm of Andrews Kurth, the firm that employed Baker before he went into politics, says that Baker Botts lawyers are not doing anything improper. And they're not bragging about their connections to the Bush Administration to get new business. Instead, says Ray, they are getting a lot of their work "by default." He adds, "They are the only ones I know who have an active energy practice in the Middle East. They are on the ground in Riyadh, and they have a huge advantage that way. The reason they have a willingness to take a leap like that is because of their contacts. They are connected in the Middle East."

That's a bit of an understatement. Several other big firms, including White & Case and two huge Texas-based firms—Akin Gump and Vinson & Elkins—are also active in the Persian Gulf. But thanks to the Bush-Baker symbiosis, Baker Botts appears to have closer ties to the Saudi royal family than any of the other firms. When two of the most powerful members of the House of Saud—the Saudi defense minister, Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, and his brother, Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, the governor of Riyadh—needed lawyers to defend them against a lawsuit brought against them and other Saudis by survivors of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Sultan and Salman hired Baker Botts. The firm categorically denies that it was hired because of any political influence it might have.

Nevertheless, Baker Botts is not shy about touting Baker's

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experience to clients interested in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. On its website, the firm says clients can use Baker as "an additional resource on which to rely regarding their activities in the region." Nor is it shy about trying to cash in on the expertise of Robert Jordan, who is the former US ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Within a few months of moving into the White House, George W. Bush named Jordan—the Baker Botts lawyer who had represented him in the early 1990s while the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) was investigating Bush's sale of stock in Harken Energy—to be his representative in Riyadh.

Jordan quit his post in Riyadh earlier this year. When he returned to Dallas in April, Baker Botts rehired him and promptly put out a press release saying that Jordan's "wealth of knowledge relating to international matters and key development initiatives in the Middle East will be a great asset to our firm."

Meanwhile, back in Houston, Baker Botts is taking care of another charter member of the Texas crony network: Halliburton. Unfortunately for the oil services giant, Dick Cheney's ineptitude as CEO has left it with a panoply of legal problems. These include allegations that it engaged in improper accounting (Halliburton recently agreed to pay a $7.5 million fine to the SEC to settle that problem); ongoing investigations by the Pentagon into apparent overbilling for its logistics work in Iraq; and a wide-ranging investigation by French and American authorities into allegations that Halliburton employees paid bribes to secure a contract for a liquefied natural gas plant in Nigeria [see Doug Ireland, "Dick Cheney and the $5 Million Man," posted June 18 at www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20040705&s=ireland].

Much of the work for Halliburton is being handled by James Doty, a partner at Baker Botts's Washington office. During the first Bush Administration, Doty spent two years as the general counsel for the SEC. In response to questions about its dealings with Baker Botts, Halliburton issued a statement that said Baker Botts is "one of the best firms in the country and, as such, has a great many exceptional lawyers who, because of their skill, attract prominent clients, of whom we are proud to be included."

Of course Baker Botts employs excellent lawyers. No doubt about it. It's also true that Halliburton's alliance with Baker Botts provides yet another example of how the Texas crony network looks after its own.

On September 2 the *Houston Chronicle* was the first to report that Baker was joining George W. Bush's campaign. Baker—who has played a key role in six of the last seven presidential elections, including all four of the races in which a man named Bush has been a candidate—was chosen to joust with Democrat Vernon Jordan over the rules and format for the presidential debates.

Now that that job is done, Baker will surely continue being the Bush family's *consigliere*. If the younger Bush's campaign begins to falter, or if there's controversy after the polls close, count on Baker to re-emerge as Bush's field marshal. And if Baker can help secure another quadrennium in the White House for the Bushes, Baker Botts will—once again—reap the benefits. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

even a "well run" invasion and occupation.)

The point is, the contractors have had plenty of time and money and have squandered both. The botched reconstruction process is a major cause of the escalating violence in Iraq. In the coming years, when we read about Iraq as a "failed state" or about its Islamic revolution or the "tragedy" of the US defeat there, we will recall how the reconstruction racket helped create this disaster and screwed over the people of Iraq and the United States. CHRISTIAN PARENTI

SIERRA CLUB CIVIL WARS

Los Angeles

■ In his "Fear of a Brown Planet" [June 28] Roberto Lovato states: "The Sierra Club recently fended off a hostile takeover by a new breed of well-heeled, anti-immigrant, anti-Latino activists who believe they're defending American civilization against the balkanizing and breeding barbarians from the South." That is sheer fabrication; consider, for example, the words "well-heeled." The old guard who have been running the Sierra Club for decades spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to buy the 2004 Sierra Club election and maintain their iron grip on power. Their "well-heeled" opponents spent a minuscule fraction of this amount. Lovato has stood the truth on its head.

The Sierra Club has a national campaign-finance-reform committee, in part to change the political system so the Republicans don't hugely outspend the Democrats and so third-party candidates have some kind of financial fighting chance. Through their record-high internal Sierra Club campaign expenditures, the old guard has made a mockery of the idea of campaign finance reform. What hypocrites.

Lovato missed the boat on what's been going on inside the Sierra Club. Progressive forces, initially allied with our late icon, David Brower, have been trying to improve its effectiveness since at least the early 1990s. There is a wide range of opinions regarding immigration among these reformers. But we all agree that, since the 1980s, the SC has been ineffective at the national level under its old leadership. We are trying to make it stronger and more effective. By publishing lies, *The Nation* is not making our task any easier. BEN ZUCKERMAN

Board of Directors, Sierra Club

LOVATO REPLIES

Los Angeles

■ Ben Zuckerman provides a textbook example of how inverting the meaning of words and phrases is fashionable in this new age of "preemptive" wars for peace and perpetual searches for internal enemies. Take, for example, his reference to "progressive forces" inside the Sierra Club. How Zuckerman can refer to himself and other "reformers" in the Sierra Club with the "progressive" designation baffles. I know of no progressives who distribute letters—as Zuckerman did—written by certified hate groups like V-DARE, letters that refer to "Hispandering politicians" who do nothing about the Latino menace Zuckerman and others regularly blame for overpopulation, disease, crime and other societal ills. If this is what "progressive forces" sound like, then it's time to find new labels, new language.

"Well-heeled" refers to the new types of better-organized, better-funded and mainstreaming organizations of the growing anti-Latino right (as opposed to older, poorer and more marginal organizations of the racist past.) "Well-heeled" refers to the fact that Zuckerman and other "reformers" belong to the Californians for Population Stabilization and other groups funded by extreme-right millionaires like John Tanton, who has done more to fund and found anti-immigrant, anti-Latino groups than any American. In what Sierra Club leaders and others believe was a takeover plot hatched in the mid-1980s, Tanton predicted in a secret 1986 memo that "the Sierra Club may not want to touch the immigration issue, but the immigration issue is going to touch the Sierra Club!"

No "progressive" I know would, like Zuckerman, describe Tanton as a "courageous human being" or write letters defending him as "a great environmentalist." Rather than use old terminology of race and bigotry to describe Zuckerman and his methods, I prefer to use a term gaining renewed vigor in a time of perpetual search for new internal enemies: dangerous.

ROBERTO LOVATO

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COMMENT

(Continued From Page 8)

the United States in international forums designed to reduce the risk of global catastrophe. MICHAEL T. KLARE

Michael T. Klare, a professor of peace and world security studies at Hampshire College, is The Nation*'s defense correspondent. His newest book is* Blood and Oil: The Dangers and Consequences of America's Growing Petroleum Dependency.

DeLay on the Hot Seat

Two investigative bombs with long fuses are sizzling under Tom DeLay, America's Machiavelli of gerrymandering and shakedown fundraising. They both involve active grand juries investigating alleged money-laundering and campaign finance abuses. DeLay, House majority leader, is still laughing off these probes in public, but he has hired criminal attorneys and begun a defense fund.

The first bomb involves the Senate's Indian Affairs Committee, led by John McCain. It is scheduled to hold a hearing on September 29 into the alleged fleecing of Indian tribes by two of DeLay's closest allies, lobbyists Jack Abramoff and Mike Scanlon. They have been paid more than $45 million over three years by casino-owning tribes for services that remain unclear. Dissidents in these tribes, who have asked to testify, claim they were duped and that most tribal members were kept in the dark about these exorbitant fees. Roy Fletcher, spokesman for the Coushatta tribe of Louisiana's pro-casino faction, which retained Abramoff, says the tribe is investigating whether it got what it paid for.

But while the hearing may expose some wrongdoing, the more threatening aspect of the Washington probe involves the FBI and a federal grand jury that has been meeting for months. Federal prosecutors have assembled a war room full of banking and billing records as well as e-mails from Abramoff and Scanlon. They are focusing on the laundering of money for personal extravagances and political campaigns.

DeLay's name may not even come up much during the Senate testimony, but in Washington he is widely regarded as the enabler of these two avatars of avarice. DeLay has adroitly disavowed his two friends—a sign of how much The Hammer has to hide.

Last year, in introducing DeLay, Abramoff declared that Tom Delay is "who all of us want to be when we grow up." Now he is on his own going into the hearing—distanced by DeLay and kicked out of his law firm, Greenberg Traurig, for taking more than $10 million in payments from Scanlon and not telling the firm. As an example of how close the relationship once appeared to be, the law firm of Abramoff, a hard-line right-winger, was paid $7.9 million over six years by the US Protectorate of the Mariana Islands to keep the garment sweatshop haven exempt from US minimum-wage laws. When the Senate repealed the exemption, DeLay killed the repeal in the House. Abramoff, his former law firm and his Indian clients have donated more than $100,000 to DeLay's PACs since 2000. Scanlon was DeLay's press secretary during the Clinton impeachment and became Abramoff's protégé.

Abramoff and Scanlon enriched themselves with tribal funds meant for education, housing and healthcare, according to the Senate staffers and an independent audit of the Coushatta tribe. They also directed about $1.5 million into Republican campaigns from the eleven tribes they represented. Tribes that gave to Democrats in the 1990s started giving to the GOP once they hired Abramoff and Scanlon. The Agua Caliente tribe of California gave $100,000 to the Republican National Committee right after they hired Abramoff in 2002, while the Saginaw Chippewas of Michigan gave $18,000 to DeLay's PAC and the Tigua tribe of Texas gave $92,000 to GOP PACs after they hired Abramoff. Scanlon's consulting company donated $500,000 to the Republican Governors Association, funds that originated with the eleven tribes, who constituted 90 percent of Scanlon's business. Abramoff himself donated to twenty-three Republican campaigns, including those of six senators and twelve Congressmen, all right-wing favorites of DeLay, like Richard Pombo, Johnny Isakson and Ernest Istook.

A big question about the hearing is whether the committee will subpoena Ralph Reed, who is now running the Bush ground campaign in five Southern states. The anti-gambling Reed has been a stealth partner of Abramoff and Scanlon, getting paid at least $4 million through Scanlon's companies to block competing casinos from cutting into the profits of the existing Coushatta casino in Louisiana. I first reported these covert payments in the July 12 issue of *The Nation*. Reed denied them for two months but finally admitted getting this money, to Alabama's *Montgomery Advertiser*, after a federal grand jury subpoenaed all his financial records involving Abramoff, Scanlon and Indian gambling.

The second bomb is sizzling in Texas, where a grand jury has just indicted three close associates of DeLay on charges of violating a state law banning corporate funding of political activity. Democratic county prosecutor Ronnie Earle has been investigating DeLay's fundraising chicanery involving the PAC of Texans for a Republican Majority. The essence of the probe is that TRMPAC illegally contributed corporate money to elect fourteen GOP state legislators in 2002 to gain state legislative control for the first time in 130 years, and then used this majority to crudely gerrymander Texas Congressional districts so that four Democrats might lose their seats this November. DeLay, who was chairman of an advisory board for the Republican Majority group, claims the probe is driven by partisan politics.

Under Texas law, the $600,000 in corporate donations could be used only for the PAC's administrative costs, like rent. But instead it was used for polling, fundraising and phone banks, according to the PAC's own public filings. TRMPAC also wired the Republican National Committee $190,000 in corporate "soft money"; two weeks later the RNC mailed legal "hard money" checks to seven state GOP candidates totaling exactly $190,000. The RNC called this "a coincidence." Among the donors to TRMPAC was Abramoff's law firm at the time, Preston, Gates & Ellis, and two tribes associated with him, for a total of $31,000 in 2000.

Tom DeLay, driven by an alloy of ideology and money, will likely be the next Speaker of the House if the GOP remains in control. That is, if these bombs don't blow up in his face first.

JACK NEWFIELD

Jack Newfield is a senior fellow of the Nation Institute.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

The Chastening of the *Times*

SCOTT SHERMAN

On March 9, 2003, a distinguished group of high-ranking politicians and journalists descended on the Bryant Park Hotel to attend a wedding reception for the then–executive editor of the *New York Times*, Howell Raines. Raines, in a white dinner jacket and black pants, swooned for the paparazzi and introduced his young Polish-born bride to guests who included Gov. George Pataki, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Senator Charles Schumer, Tom Brokaw, Dan Rather and Charlie Rose. "I remember thinking, good for you, Howell," *Times* staffer Warren Hoge later confessed to *Vanity Fair*. "You're on top of the world, the newspaper's going great, you've married this great woman. If someone had come up and said, 'This man will be deposed in three months,' I'd have given him odds of 10,000 to 1."

But deposed he was. A few weeks later Raines's reputation sank when it was revealed that a wily young reporter named Jayson Blair had shamelessly manufactured and plagiarized details in dozens of news stories he had written for the *Times*. With media watchers breathing down its neck, the *Times* panicked and rushed into print a 14,000-word account of Blair's chicanery that took up four full pages of the Sunday edition for May 11, 2003. Three days later, at a tension-filled staff meeting at a rented Times Square movie theater, newsroom employees vented their fury at Raines and his boss, publisher Arthur Sulzberger Jr.

By unveiling a thorough chronicle of Blair's deceptions, Raines and Sulzberger had expected to put the affair to rest. The strategy backfired: The Blair scandal expanded in scope and intensity, and developed a cruel momentum of its own. Demands for Raines's scalp began to proliferate in journalistic circles, and on June 4, 2003, he was forced to resign, along with his deputy, Gerald Boyd. It was only the second time in the paper's history that the top editor had failed to complete his term, and Raines suffered the further ignominy of having his demise reported on the front pages of both the *New York Daily News* and the *New York Post*. ("OUT!" shrieked the *News*; "PAPER OF WRECKAGE" bellowed the *Post*.)

One might have expected Raines to fade away quietly with a *Times* pension and a comfortable teaching post. But in a radical break with *Times* tradition and etiquette, he composed an audacious counterattack in the May issue of *The Atlantic*. "My intention here," he declared at the outset of a lacerating 21,000-word essay titled "My *Times*," "is to perform a final service for the newspaper that I worked for and loved for twenty-five years, by revealing the real struggle that was going on behind the scenes at the *Times* as the Blair scandal played out." That struggle, Raines insisted, concerned his attempt to consolidate a "managerial reformation" at a paper that, before he took the helm, was "becoming duller, slower, and more uneven in quality with every passing day," a paper with an internal culture "that requires mass allegiance to the idea that any change…is to be treated as a potential danger."

"My *Times*" has received cursory attention from a press corps that is entranced, awed and intimidated by the *Times*. That's lamentable, because Raines has given us what is probably the most revealing X-ray of the paper's inner sanctum since Gay Talese's *The Kingdom and the Power* in 1969. Former *Times* executives don't usually speak forthrightly about the institution they served. Consider the case of Arthur Gelb, who rose from copy boy to managing editor in his forty-six-year career on 43rd Street and who, with *Times*ian restraint, has now chronicled his newsroom adventures in a hefty volume, *City Room*. Raines, who was once close to Gelb but has since broken with him, eschews that polite approach. Where Gelb is stodgy, Raines is pungent; where Gelb is sentimental, Raines is realistic; where Gelb offers platitudes about the *Times*, Raines offers wry aphorisms,

Scott Sherman is a contributing writer for The Nation.

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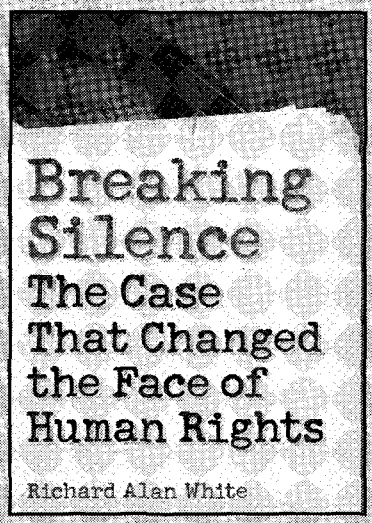
TORT AND TORTURE



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gallows humor, poison darts and *bons mots* worthy of Mencken. *City Room*, despite some winsome anecdotes, comes dangerously close to hagiography. "My *Times*," by contrast, is the work of a journalistic fugitive with nothing to lose, a man pugnaciously determined to go down swinging.

Who is Howell Raines, and why has he uttered such disagreeable things about the *New York Times*? Raines was born in 1943 in Birmingham, Alabama, where his father had a successful lumber and woodworking business. In 1961, with the civil rights movement in full bloom, he enrolled at Birmingham-Southern College. In his fine 2002 *New Yorker* profile of Raines (an expanded version of which appears in his book *Backstory*), Ken Auletta notes that only two students from the college had the courage to participate in the civil rights protests—and Raines wasn't among them. Raines confessed to *The New Yorker* that he wasn't "brave enough" to stand up to Bull Connor, and Auletta concludes, "A mixture of shame and a belief that he was witnessing a momentous event sparked his interest in journalism."

In 1967, Raines began graduate work at the University of Alabama's English department and fashioned an identity for himself as a man of letters. (His revealing 1993 memoir, *Fly Fishing Through the Midlife Crisis*, is filled with references to Yeats, Mark Twain, Faulkner, Hemingway, James Mellow, Leslie Fiedler...) But it was newspaper work that paid the bills, and by 1970 Raines had landed a job at the *Atlanta Constitution*. In 1977 he published two books: *My Soul Is Rested*, a stirring oral history of the civil rights movement, modeled on the work of Studs Terkel, and *Whiskey Man*, a novel that the University of Alabama Press has kept in print. In 1978 Raines joined the *New York Times* and two years later was assigned to cover the Reagan White House. He eventually sought the position of Washington bureau chief but was rebuffed. His consolation prize? A choice between the London and Paris bureaus. R.W. Apple Jr. urged him to pick London, for one very specific reason: "The Sulzberger family," Auletta writes, "passed through London regularly; Raines would get to know everyone who mattered to his career." Raines never quite mastered the art of foreign correspondence: "Senior people at the paper," Auletta notes, "say they cannot remember a single memorable story that Raines did from overseas."

Yet Raines did manage to forge a special relationship with Arthur Sulzberger Jr., who appointed him executive editor in 2001. In his own detailed analysis of the paper's finances and demographics, Raines grew alarmed: The *Times*'s daily circulation was roughly 1.1 million (in a nation of 290 million), far below those of the *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today*, and its precious advertising revenue was relatively flat. Raines arrived at a conclusion "which could not be mentioned to my senior editorial colleagues without triggering a heresy trial: our business side had harvested all the growth it could from the paper we were giving it to peddle." Chiefly responsible for that lackluster state of affairs, he felt, were the paper's writers and editors. With the company facing vigorous competition, Raines came to realize that the *Times* could no longer serve readers "eat-your-peas journalism and insist that they swallow it as a duty of citizenship."

As executive editor, Raines made it his mission to eradicate what he saw as a culture of mediocrity at the *Times*: "Great work," he writes, "gets the great praise it deserves, but routine work, too, is praised as excellent...and sloppy work is accepted as adequate." In his previous position as editorial page editor, he supervised a relatively small department of several dozen people. In his new post as executive editor, he had to direct a massive newsroom full of "lethargy and complacency," a newsroom that often practiced what he calls "mañana journalism": "Some departments hastily and explicitly school impressionable reporters in shrugging off scoops by other news organizations, with the reassuring but dangerously outmoded *Times* maxim, 'It's not news until we say it's news.'"

Raines became executive editor shortly before the terror attacks on New York City and Washington, and, in *The Atlantic*, he goes out of his way to effusively praise the staff's Pulitzer Prize–winning coverage of 9/11 and the Afghan war. But when the dust from those mega-stories settled, Raines sank into despair and disillusionment. He wanted a newspaper that was smarter, leaner, faster, better written, more sophisticated, more competitive and in sync with a youthful demographic. Instead he found himself at the helm of a publication he himself could barely read. In his droll memoir, *The Good Times* (1989), Russell Baker, whose wit and intelligence adorned the paper's op-ed page for three decades, averred that the *Times* was "full of writing that made you think of people playing pianos with boxing gloves on." Raines came to feel the same way. "One of our dirty little in-house secrets," he whispers, "was that even we, who were paid to read it, often couldn't hack the Sunday paper."

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Raines was not the first editor to undertake a "managerial reformation" at the *New York Times*. Turner Catledge, another son of the South, ran the *Times* newsroom in the 1950s and '60s, and set down his experiences in a 1971 memoir, *My Life and The Times*, a book that Raines cites as "essential reading for anyone who sought to understand the resistance to change at the paper." Catledge's *Times* was financially successful and nationally renowned—yet, he wrote, it suffered from "an unnecessary stodginess in the way the news was reported and written." In the late 1940s, when he was assistant managing editor, Catledge would sometimes suggest improvements to his boss, Edwin James, but "his attitude would be, 'Why change? We're doing all right, aren't we?'" Catledge nevertheless persisted in his crusade to enliven and modernize the paper, and to improve its dreary prose. In 1959 he politely suggested to the publisher, Arthur Hays Sulzberger, that the young Gay Talese be given the "About New York" column. Sulzberger said all the right things—"I'd be glad to see some of Talese's work"—but the column was never authorized. In *The Kingdom and the Power*—still the most outstanding book on the *Times*, and a dazzling masterpiece in its own right—Talese went inside Catledge's head to record his true feelings about the institution: "For all its size, the *Times* was a rather delicate and sensitive monstrosity. It had to be petted, cajoled, prodded gently. It was like an elephant...a slow-moving, heavy creature." One finishes Catledge's memoir with the feeling that he coaxed the elephant to move in a straight line, but not to dance.

Raines, in his own attempt to force an elephant to behave like a puma, initiated a number of measures to increase the paper's "competitive metabolism." He wanted his national correspondents to vacate their cubicles and travel more for their stories, and he also attempted to rotate some of them to different regions. These modest goals nearly sparked a putsch: At least one national correspondent was reluctant to leave his posting for personal reasons, and Raines was pilloried by the staff for not being family-friendly. Revisiting the episode, Auletta scolds the *Times* newsroom for jumping to conclusions about Raines's decision-making: "Although the newsroom is populated by reporters, often facts do not intrude on their opinions." On major stories, Raines wanted the paper to "flood the zone"—to use its massive resources to overwhelm competing newspapers. So the *Times* ran dozens of stories about the Augusta National Golf Club's refusal to admit women—a genuine Raines crusade that reflected his own passions (sports, the South, equal opportunity) and that brought scorn and mockery to 43rd Street. The decision by Raines to flood the zone with blanket coverage of the Enron scandal was likewise ridiculed by those who thought the *Times* was becoming too political and crusading.

"Sociology" was a word that tumbled frequently from Raines's lips when he spoke about reforming the paper. On Enron, he had a ready answer for his critics: "It's a story of as much sociological significance potentially as the great populist reaction to the abuses of the Gilded Age." Sociology, he thought, could also help to capture the hearts and minds of younger readers. But instead of take-no-prisoners reporting about, say, access to health insurance and higher education, Raines opted for revamped coverage of style and popular culture: "The serial ups and downs of a Britney Spears," he announces in the *Atlantic*, "are a sociological and economic phenomenon that is... worthy of serious reporting." The *Times*'s page one Sunday feature on Spears (October 6, 2002) was not serious reporting and not sociology, but piffle.

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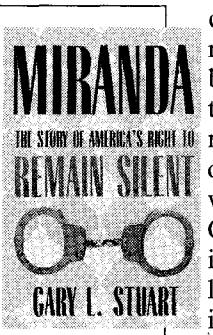

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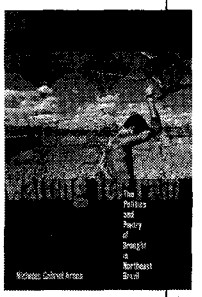

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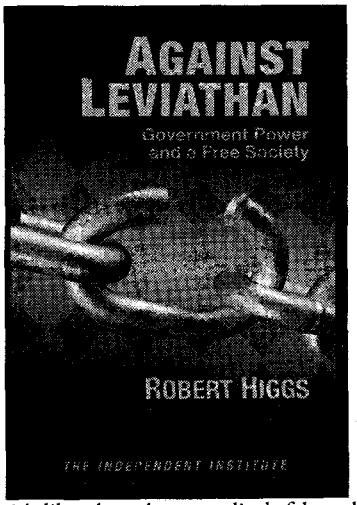

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count of the *Times* wars, *Hard News*, which reads like a hastily assembled prosecutorial brief against Raines, Seth Mnookin notes that denizens of certain cubicles began to refer to their boss as Mullah Omar; what one Raines critic called a "guerrilla war" was in full swing. Raines professes to be a Civil War buff, but he was outmaneuvered in his own backyard: He possessed Catledge's reformist longings, but lacked his instinct for self-preservation: Sometimes, Talese notes, Catledge "would stand outside his office door with a pair of binoculars raised to his eyes, bringing everybody in the vast newsroom into close, sharp focus." Raines didn't have binoculars, or eyes in the back of his head. He needed both. One top editor and Raines critic, Jonathan Landman, later told *Vanity Fair*, "Howell was bound and determined to establish the notion that the paper was full of lazy slugs and he had to kick their ass. What was happening was a kind of undifferentiated rage at his parts of the paper."

For all its stylishness and bravado, Raines's jeremiad offers an incomplete record of his abbreviated tenure at 43rd Street. He doesn't flood the zone. For one thing, the essay minimizes the extent to which his "managerial reformation" was undone by his own imperious style. In December 2002, top editors spiked two sports columns (by Dave Anderson and Harvey Araton) that dissented from the paper's official stance on the Augusta National Golf Club. The logic in the Araton column, Boyd remarked with classic *Times* pomposity, "did not meet our standards." (After a hailstorm of criticism, the columns were eventually printed.) One gathers that Raines's handpicked deputy inspired much fear and loathing in the newsroom. The *Wall Street Journal*, in its own inquiry into Raines's demise, described a high-level meeting at which Douglas Frantz, then the paper's investigations editor, bluntly contradicted one of Boyd's assertions. After the meeting, Boyd, whose persona could be rather menacing, told Frantz: "You shouldn't humiliate the managing editor." (Frantz eventually left the paper.)

"My *Times*" is weakened by other omissions. A 21,000-word essay of this sort ought to contain the words "Iraq" and "Judith Miller." Much of Miller's shoddiest reporting, after all, took place on Raines's watch, and it displayed, as many critics have pointed out, a credulous reliance on "inside" and "official" sources. (For a hard-hitting survey of the *Times*'s Iraq coverage, with a special emphasis on Miller's transgressions, see Howard Friel and Richard Falk's forthcoming *The Record of the Paper*.) In a sense, Miller was adhering to a deep tradition at the *New York Times*, one that has survived Raines's short-lived reformation. It's a tradition that is practically encoded in the paper's DNA. Adolph Ochs, who created the modern *New York Times* in 1896, despised the muckraking in Joseph Pulitzer's *World*; he wanted a centrist, impartial, passion-free newspaper for the business class. ("We are not a crusading newspaper," Arthur Hays Sulzberger once lectured the young Arthur Gelb.)

By and large, every one of Och's successors in the publisher's chair has preserved that vision, not least because it was a superb business model: "Ochs had not made a fortune out of the newspaper business," Talese noted dryly, "by offending the mighty, crusading for reforms, espousing the causes of the have-nots against the haves." Still, a journalistic price was paid: The paper's deference to power led to debacles like the Bay of Pigs affair in 1961. (Tad Szulc's story about the impending invasion, which had already been reported in *The Nation*, was set to run on the front page, but the publisher, Orvil Dryfoos, neutered it; John F. Kennedy himself later reproached the *Times* for not printing all the relevant facts.)

During the Vietnam era, when dissident winds swept through the journalistic profession, some of the best and brightest talent at the *Times* publicly contested the Ochsian philosophy of newsgathering. At a 1972 convention sponsored by the vibrant but short-lived journalism review *[MORE]*, Tom Wicker skewered the "official sources" approach, which, he said, fostered a front-page mentality based on a "spurious objectivity," a mentality that "imposes such a deadly sameness on our newspapers." Six years later, in his book *On Press*, Wicker implored journalists to "take an adversary position toward the most powerful institutions of American life." In a 1973 *[MORE]* profile of *Times éminence grise* James Reston, J. Anthony Lukas excoriated his cozy, insider reporting ("Perhaps he was right to trust William Fulbright, Mike Mansfield or John Gardner," Lukas said, but "what of Robert McNamara, William Rogers and Henry Kissinger?"). Later, in his memoir, Russell Baker blasted a hole through "objective" reporting: "No matter how dull, stupid, unfair, vicious or mendacious they might be, the utterances of the great were to be reported deadpan, with nary a hint that the speaker might be a bore, a dunce, a brute, or a habitual liar." (One aphorism from that book ought to be engraved on the wall of every newsroom: "Only a fool expects the authorities to tell him what the news is.")

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Despite these and other warnings, the Sulzberger family was always reluctant to depart from core Ochsian principles. Even in the wake of the Judith Miller affair—when the paper published (on page A10) a 1,200-word "From the Editors" note lamenting the shortcomings of its Iraq coverage, a mea culpa partly inspired by Miller's reliance on dubious Iraqi defectors and hard-line Administration operatives—the *Times*, in too many instances, continues to permit the authorities to define the news concerning terrorism and national security; quotations from named and unnamed Administration "officials" continue to cascade down page one. (Not long ago, the London *Independent*'s Middle East correspondent, Robert Fisk, quipped that the *New York Times* ought simply to change its name to "American Officials Say.") If Howell Raines has an intellectual quarrel with the shopworn, deferential, "official sources" model of newspapering, which has been so injurious to American journalism in general and the *New York Times* in particular, he doesn't say so in *The Atlantic*.

"He had the drive, moxie and talent to succeed at 43rd Street." That's how one *Times* editor described the young Jayson Blair. But Blair soon began to unravel under the weight of drug addiction, alcohol abuse and—if one chooses to believe his memoir, *Burning Down My Masters' House*—mental illness. Blair's behavior was peculiar, and his work frequently had to be corrected in print. On April 1, 2002, one of his supervisors, Jonathan Landman, drafted an internal memo that vanished into bureaucratic limbo. "We have to stop Jayson from writing for the *New York Times*," he declared. "Right now." The paper's own investigation of the Blair affair—released to the public in July 2003 and known as the Siegal report—shows how Blair continued to receive promotions and salary increases, thanks in large part to the largesse of Gerald Boyd. It was Boyd who chaired the recruiting committee that promoted Blair to "regular full-time staff" reporter; and it was Boyd who, despite Landman's warning, first suggested that Blair be assigned to one of the biggest stories of 2002: the Washington area sniper case.

Raines was shad fishing with John McPhee on the Delaware River the day the *Times* published its 14,000-word exposé on Blair. "It was a foggy day," he recalls. "As we floated along in a McKenzie River drift boat, bald eagles flushed from the shoreline timber and flapped away downstream. I read the story in sections as the day unfolded, and I knew at that point that I was unlikely to survive." The exposé sidestepped a matter of crucial import for the executive editor: What did he know about Blair's history, and when did he know it? Raines says he knew about Blair's substance abuse (which, he insists, was hardly an unusual problem at the *Times*), but had never been informed about "Jayson's pattern of playing fast and loose with the facts": The famous Landman memo had never reached his desk. If that's true, Raines's career may have been undone by a single bureaucratic oversight.

Raines returned from his shad-fishing trip a wounded man. The staff was already in revolt against his top-down managerial style, and the guerrillas now had a golden opportunity. In desperation, Raines consulted one of the political shamans on his payroll, William Safire, and half-seriously requested some of the "high-priced survival advice he used to give Nixon." Cancel the upcoming staff meeting at the movie theater, Safire insisted. The storm was moving out to sea, and the meeting would only embolden Raines's detractors. That he didn't heed the columnist—the meeting was a tumultuous "disaster"—is something Raines now regrets.

At that gathering, the publisher assured the staff that Raines's job was secure; but as the weeks passed and the media firestorm raged and the guerrilla war continued, Sulzberger wavered. Raines says he heard from Arthur Gelb that "the cousins"—that is, future stockholders from the Sulzberger family—were edgy: "Gelb said they couldn't abide hearing Jay Leno and David Letterman telling jokes about the *Times*, and they were worried about the dinner-party chatter they were hearing in Manhattan." (Gelb does not mention that conversation in *City Room*.) On June 4, 2003, Raines was dismissed by Arthur Sulzberger Jr.; Boyd, too, was taken to the gallows. Declares Raines: "Arthur believed that if I stayed there would be 'too much blood on the floor.'"

The man who penned the *Atlantic* essay is a man who seems at peace with himself: "I do not miss the daily grind of newspapering or the ephemeral nature of newspaper writing." Perhaps Howell Raines has earned his tranquillity: The student who lacked the courage to march in Birmingham in 1963 eventually mustered the *cojones* to compose a memorable adieu to the *New York Times*. And what of his "managerial reformation"? The Siegal report, says Raines, "shows an institution in denial." Its conclusions are a "hymn to the old status quo, drafted by the very people who most strongly resisted the idea of a more vigorous and inclusive way of producing the paper."

EXPOSURES

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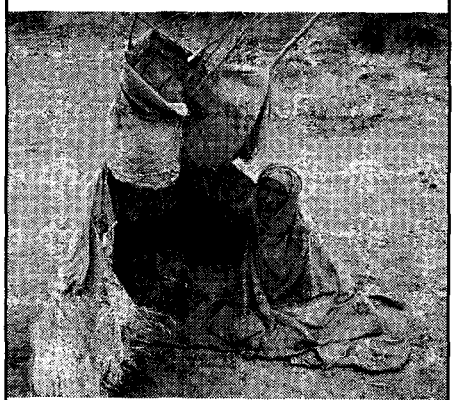

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The Blair affair ended disastrously for Raines and Boyd, but not for readers of the *New York Times*. The intense media scrutiny around Blair gave the *Times* a heavy, unprecedented dose of its own medicine, and the paper did something it had resisted for almost forty years: It hired an ombudsman (and gave him the title of "public editor"). "We are enormously powerful, and we are very scary," Arthur Sulzberger Jr. told the Associated Press in mid-2003. "And we only know that when actually we've been covered. How do we open ourselves up, make ourselves more accessible and make ourselves more accountable? We've got to do it."

And so it was done—but why did it take so long? As Professor Neil Nemeth points out in his monograph *News Ombudsmen in North America*, the *Times* itself helped to float the ombudsman idea in the first place: Writing in the *Times Magazine* in 1967, the great labor reporter A.H. Raskin urged newspapers to create a "Department of Internal Criticism." To its credit, the *Washington Post* hired an ombudsman in 1970, and has kept one on the payroll ever since. The *Times* resisted such a move, for reasons outlined by Raines's successor, Bill Keller, in his introduction to the Siegal report: "We worried that it would foster nit-picking and navel-gazing, that it might undermine staff morale and, worst of all, that it would absolve other editors of *their* responsibility to represent the interests of readers."

This is polite nonsense. The *Times* resisted an ombudsman because it wanted to preserve its status as "the world's greatest newspaper" by projecting to the planet an aura of invincibility—what Raines calls "the *Times*'s defining myth of effortless superiority." The paper has always had critics; and sometimes those critics took their complaints to the publisher's front door. In 1968, protesters from Columbia University, livid at the paper's coverage of the student strike, gathered outside Punch Sulzberger's Fifth Avenue apartment and chanted: "*New York Times—print the truth!*" But the *Times* has always endeavored, with almost complete success, to keep criticism of itself outside its own pages. Practically by definition, the ombudsman's job is to let the criticism in. At gunpoint, the *Times* hired one in 2003.

He is Daniel Okrent, and he began his career as a book editor at Alfred A. Knopf in the 1960s. He created the magazine *New England Monthly*, after which he found comfort and security as an executive at Time Inc. He has written a nimble history of Rockefeller Center, *Great Fortune*; he competes in the annual national crossword championship; and he belongs to a dining club called "The Innard Circle," whose carnivorous members nibble on dishes made of heart, kidney, brains and lung. Last December, in his first column, Okrent introduced himself to readers as a centrist Democrat who would rather spend his "weekends exterminating rats in the tunnels below Penn Station than read a book by either Bill O'Reilly or Michael Moore."

In his biweekly column, Okrent has posed searching questions about a wide range of specific subjects covered in the *Times*, including the Howard Dean campaign (why, he wondered, did political reporter Jodi Wilgoren aver in print that "Dr. Dean smirked his trademark smirk"?); the Tyco trial (why did the paper print embarrassing personal details about a crucial juror?); the *Toledo Blade*'s series on US war crimes in Vietnam (why did the editors wait nine weeks to report the explosive revelations?); the Tony Hendra sex scandal (why are sordid accusations "fit to print"?); and the Tony Awards (why is the *Times*'s coverage so full of sycophancy?).

On other occasions, Okrent has tackled more ambitious themes: Why do so many *Times* A-section stories—he suggested 40 percent—contain anonymous sources? Is the *Times* a "paper of record"—and should it be? Is it a "liberal" newspaper? ("Of course it is," he responded). A number of Okrent columns have contained apologies, half apologies and quarter apologies from *Times* staffers. (Asked by Okrent why it took so long to report the *Toledo Blade* revelations, Roger Cohen, who was then the foreign editor, replied that he was "focused on Iraq" and "did not give it the attention it deserved.") For *Times* staffers, scrutiny of this sort is no doubt humbling; for readers it is refreshing—not least because Okrent goes about his business with wit, elegance, precision and humor. One often disagrees with his judgments (if the paper is so "liberal" why, when John Leonard quit the *Times*, did Arthur Gelb inform him, "The *Times* is a centrist institution, and *you* are not a centrist"?),

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But I do not go forward
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Or the sculptor of these clouds?
[...]
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Of fading borders
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And one caravan losing another
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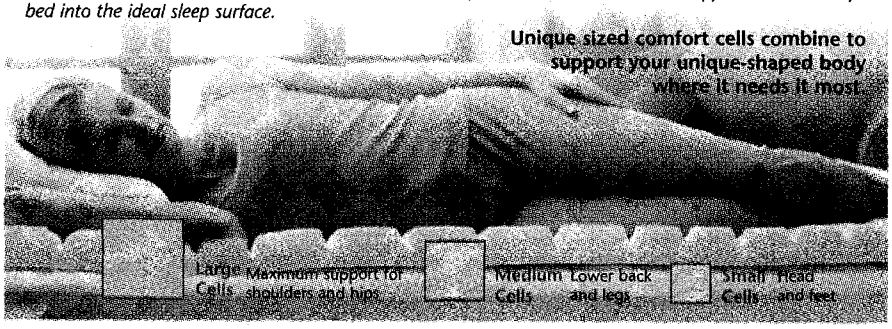
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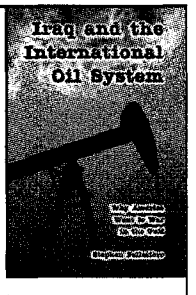

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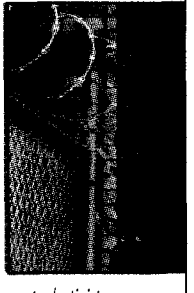

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but he's almost always a pleasure to read.

Perhaps because he's been feasting on so many 43rd Street innards, Okrent, who has directed nearly 5,000 messages and inquiries to the *Times* staff, has been a target of guerrilla reprisals. In a cheeky self-interview published in February, Okrent wrote: "*So tell me, Dan. How are they treating you at The Times?* I'm glad you asked. It has been both better and worse than I expected—better because a lot of people here believe that the *Times* should be as open to examination as those the *Times* itself examines each day.... What's worse than I expected is the overt hostility from some of those who don't want me here." According to the *Wall Street Journal*, one *Times* reporter, David Cay Johnston, convinced that Okrent had slandered a colleague in a private exchange with a reader, urged *Times* people to gang up on the public editor at a January meeting: "Sometimes," Johnston bragged to the *Journal*, "you have to treat others like the Russians—you have to demonstrate strength." (Okrent said he faced a "lynch mob.") One *Times* editor drubbed by Okrent, Suzanne Daley, sneeringly questioned his credentials: "I think he suffers from not being a newspaperman."

"To open a window"—that's how Okrent has modestly defined his undertaking at the *New York Times*. The window is open, and gusts of fresh air are flowing in. Closing that window won't be easy: Three months into the job, Okrent had already received 11,000 e-mail messages from *Times* readers, many of whom clearly see a need for a Department of Internal Criticism. Okrent's contract expires in May. In the meantime, the public editor is busy tending to the interests of the public. His columns differ in tone, texture and content, but each one contains a powerful message: *New York Times—print the truth.* ■

Homeland Insecurity

GEORGE SCIALABBA

One hundred years ago, in the wake of England's ruinous victory in the Boer War, a young Liberal politician excoriated the ruling Conservative Party and its imperial scam: "A party of great vested interests, banded together in a formidable confederation, corruption at home, aggression to cover it up abroad...sentiment by the bucketful, patriotism by the imperial pint, the open hand at the public exchequer, the open door at the public house, dear food for the millions, cheap labor for the millionaire." As Lewis Lapham points out in *Gag Rule*, where this and a great many other nuggets of historically apposite and rhetorically scintillating prose are marshaled, these words of Winston Churchill fairly describe the Bush II Administration as well. (Substitute "church" for "public house," of course.) If only a few Democratic voices could find the young Churchill's register.

Lapham, the editor of *Harper's*, stands ready to help. His monthly columns and half dozen previous books regularly strike this same (early-)Churchillian note of indignant scorn for the plutocracy and its government servants. Lapham is particularly offended by one of the most egregious developments in recent American history: the erosion of republican institutions by Republican administrations. In the 1970s and '80s he sponsored many memorable essays by the great critic Walter Karp, above all "Liberty Under Siege" (*Harper's*, November 1985), a definitive chronicle of the Reagan Administration's "unflagging campaign to exalt the power of the presidency and to undermine the power of the law, the courts, the Congress, and the people." Since then,

George Scialabba writes about books for The Nation, *the* Boston Globe, Boston Review *and other publications.*

BOOKS DISCUSSED IN THIS ESSAY:

GAG RULE.
By Lewis H. Lapham.
Penguin. 178 pp. $19.95.

WHAT WE'VE LOST.
By Graydon Carter.
Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 340 pp. $25.

THINGS WORTH FIGHTING FOR: Collected Writings.
By Michael Kelly.
Penguin. 426 pp. $26.95.

POLITICS: Observations & Arguments, 1966–2004.
By Hendrik Hertzberg.
Penguin. 683 pp. $29.95.

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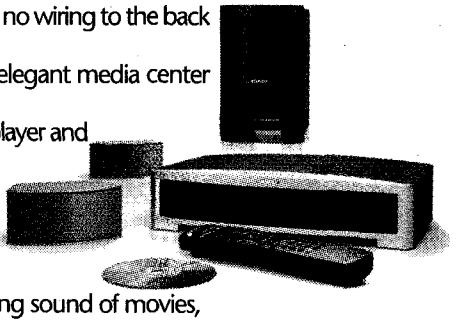

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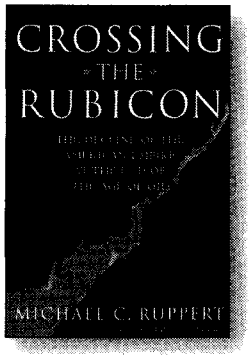

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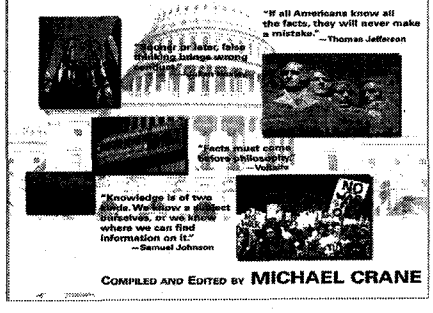
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the courts and the Congress have joined the attack on democratic accountability and popular sovereignty. Executive-branch decision-making is increasingly insulated from public scrutiny and comment; more and more important documents are unavailable or unaffordable; the prerogatives of law-enforcement agencies are steadily expanded in the national-security area, though narrowed in respect of tax and securities fraud, air and water pollution, violations of labor law and occupational safety rules, and other constraints on profitability. *Harper's* has done stellar work in showing how the claims of the Reagan and Gingrich revolutions to "get government off the backs of the American people" merely camouflaged their sustained effort to keep the American people off the backs of the government and its corporate principals.

Gag Rule is not quite stellar. The balance between eloquence and substance is off; the book is declaimed rather than written. War imperils independent thought and speech; governments often invoke patriotism to enforce conformity. This is Lapham's brief, and although familiar, it is always worth bringing up to date. He calls an impressive parade of witnesses. For freedom: Jefferson, Madison, Paine, Lincoln, Fenimore Cooper, Teddy Roosevelt, Learned Hand, Will Durant, Archibald MacLeish. Against: the bad-school-spirit-hunting American Council of Trustees and Alumni (Lynne Cheney, Kristol, Bennett, Peretz et al.); the post-9/11 pack of bloodthirsty columnists and editorialists; various Congressional and Administration bozos. He cites the historical precedents: the abuse of dissenters during the Peloponnesian War, the First World War, the cold war. So far, so good. But his oratory gets out of hand. Too thunderous an eloquence makes the ears ache. I am always ready to answer Lapham's clarion calls, but where exactly am I being summoned by a sentence like this?

> By discounting what the brokers classify as "nonmarket values," we downgrade our faith in the republic from the strength of a conviction to the weakness of a sentiment, and we're left with a body politic defined not as the union of its collective energies and hopes but as an aggregate of loosely affiliated interests (ethnic, regional, commercial, sexual) each armed with its own manifesto, loyal to its own agenda, secure in the compound of its own jargon—democracy understood as a fancy Greek name for the American Express card, the government seen as a Florida resort hotel, its assortment of goods and services deserving of respect in the exact degree to which it satisfies the whims of its patrons and meets the expectations of comfort and style at both the discount and holiday rates.

Graydon Carter, the editor in chief of *Vanity Fair*, ought to have been Lapham's co-counsel. *What We've Lost* is surprisingly plainspoken, free of grandiloquence or snarkiness—and none the worse for it. It too is a brief: that the Bush Administration has performed execrably in every field, notably the economy, the environment, healthcare, education, civil rights, government accountability, judicial appointments, foreign affairs and national security. Carter's method is to quote short, boilerplate statements of noble purpose by the President or other high-level officials, then list scores of facts that show the statements to be insincere, even dishonest. It is extremely effective.

What We've Lost has been criticized as a clip job, a blizzard of hastily culled, bullet-listed facts flung between hard covers. Facts, these critics admonish us, do not interpret themselves. On the contrary, they often do, which is why the Administration keeps removing inconvenient ones from government publications and websites. Confronted with Carter's lists of

§ urgent security measures still unfunded;

§ essential military gear unprovided to American combat personnel, while Halliburton and Bechtel are showered with public cash;

§ cuts in pay and health coverage for armed services personnel and their families;

§ deceptive statements about air quality in Manhattan after 9/11;

§ presidential and departmental orders restricting public access to essential information;

§ controversial legislation passed at strange hours, after curtailed debate;

§ controversial regulatory policies announced on Friday afternoons after 5;

§ tax hardships of ordinary Americans compared with tax windfalls for Republican campaign contributors;

§ regulatory appointees with extremely close ties to the industry they are supposed to regulate;

§ the environmental consequences of Clean Skies and other Administration programs;

§ the heavy burdens imposed on underfunded school districts by No Child Left Behind; and

§ the colorful backgrounds of many recent federal judicial appointees,

few readers will any longer believe the Bush Administration capable of, or even much interested in, advancing the nation's welfare. Though not as entertaining as the

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magazine Carter edits, *What We've Lost* is a real public service. Give a copy to every potential Bush voter you know, and you will have performed an important civic duty.

Their virtues notwithstanding, *Gag Rule* and *What We've Lost* are tracts for the times. Michael Kelly's and Hendrik Hertzberg's collections, though timely, are not. Each covers a lot of cultural ground, contains much brilliant writing and conveys a distinctive voice. Both will be, or deserve to be, read long after the 2004 campaign.

Michael Kelly, former editor of *The New Republic* and *The Atlantic*, notoriously had strong likes and dislikes. He despised "pacifists," "anti-American" leftists and "strident economic populists." Since he would doubtless have considered me all of these, I always assumed he would have despised me and cordially despised him in return. His death in April 2003, while covering the US invasion of Iraq, did not change my feelings. But reading *Things Worth Fighting For* has changed them somewhat. It's impossible not to warm to someone who writes so charmingly about the nonstop nattering of 2-year-olds ("Back to You, Tom") and 4-year-olds ("Sunshine on My Shoulders"), so wryly about the downside of enlightened social policy ("Wonk New World," "The Lure of the Evil Weed"), so ruefully about being fat ("Girth of a Nation"), so Thurberesquely about Robert Reich ("The Reich Stuff"), so savagely about Richard Holbrooke ("A Plea for Diversity") and so sardonically about the *New York Times*'s "About Men" column ("Good Riddance to the 'New Man'"). Kelly was a fine storyteller: His dispatches from Bosnia and the Persian Gulf are full of sharp-edged anecdotes and revealing dialogue. Two long pieces from Kuwait ("The Rape and Rescue of Kuwait City" and "Rolls-Royce Revolutionaries") and two from Kurdistan ("The Other Hell" and "Back to the Hills") are superb. So is this passage—just about the only one in the book that deals graciously with any person or idea to Kelly's left:

> We are not a nation that worries a great deal about the chicken pluckers among us. Somebody has to speak for them, and Jesse Jackson does, with beauty and with strength. In a country where most of the well-fed white men who run both parties have made a corrupt peace with the abandonment of the poor, with the devastation of entire cities, with the decimation of generations of black families, it is desperately important that there be a voice demanding that attention must be paid.

Mostly, however, he paid no attention. Instead he concentrated almost exclusively on character. For Kelly, politics meant the character of politicians; virtually nothing else about it seems to have interested him deeply. Along with dispatches from the front, *Things Worth Fighting For* consists largely of profiles from *GQ*, *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times Magazine* of Bill Clinton, Hillary Clinton, Jesse Jackson, Ted Kennedy, Bob Dole, Richard Daley Jr., David Gergen and Yasir Arafat, among others. They are very good profiles, full of information, color and shrewd character judgments. Jesse Jackson is "the mirror image of Ronald Reagan, one who sees mostly an America defined, forever and ever, by the lessons of his childhood." Bill Clinton's "essential character flaw isn't dishonesty so much as a-honesty." And so on.

But Kelly lost track of causes in judging their adherents. "Imitation Activism" rebukes antiglobalization activists at a G-7 meeting. Comparing them unfavorably with Vietnam-era protesters, whom he compares unfavorably with civil rights marchers, he pronounces them "a generational imitation of a generational imitation of a form of politics that was once reserved for matters of life and death" and informs them that "you don't possess anything that can coherently

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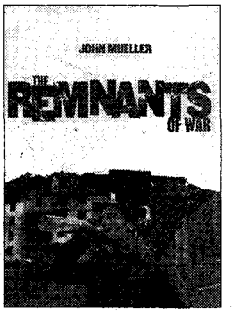

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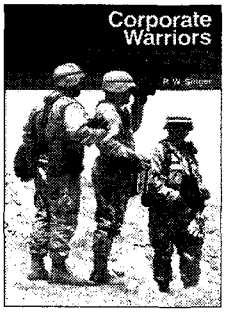

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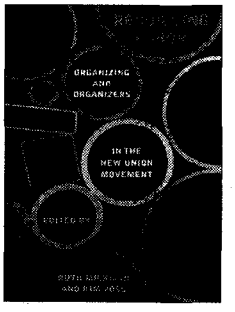

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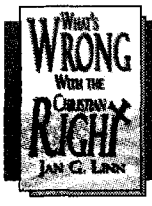

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be called a cause." That's Kelly's first and last word on the global economy. After observing a Kuwaiti corpse tortured by Iraqi invaders, "I never again could stand the arguments of those who sat in the luxury of safety—'advocating nonresistance behind the guns of the American Fleet,' as George Orwell wrote of World War II pacifists." So he simply ignores the wimps' arguments against invading Iraq twelve years later. International law, collective security, diplomacy—these are for political girlie men.

The poisoned fruit of Kelly's fixation on character was his obsessive hatred of the Clintons. He often seemed to want to say something about the perils of liberal elitism and social engineering. I wish he had; it would have been worth reading. Unfortunately, it always came out sideways, as suspicion or resentment of liberal elitists, personified by Bill, Hillary and friends. When Clinton's adultery and cover-up became public, Kelly saw in it a profoundly significant instance of class exploitation and abuse—Bill's, and then his lawyers', of Paula and Gennifer. He pursued Clinton like a Fury. "He must be impeached," Kelly thundered nine times at the end of one particularly overwrought *Washington Post* column, like Cato the Elder demanding the destruction of Carthage, "because, in his pathology, he does great and heartless violence to other people and to the nation." One can forgive Kelly for believing, however implausibly, that Clinton's offenses warranted impeachment. But not to notice that the Republican Congressional majority was merely exploiting the Democrats' paralysis to continue doing its far greater and more heartless everyday violence—regulatory, environmental, fiscal, judicial—this is much harder to forgive. Kelly eventually transferred his anathema to Al Gore. In a column wisely not reproduced in this book, he opined (I'm quoting from memory): "Better a 40-watt bulb [i.e., GWB] as president than someone so tainted by the corruptions of the Clinton White House." If 537 people in Florida read that sentence and were persuaded by it, then Kelly has a lot to answer for.

In September's *American Prospect*, Matthew Iglesias looks back at the 2000 election:

> With the country enjoying a seemingly endless spell of peace and prosperity, and no apparent daunting challenges facing the next chief executive, the media were finally granted the chance to construct a narrative entirely around personalities. Al Gore, based on a handful of small exaggerations and his association with the occasionally sordid behavior of Bill Clinton, was said to have a character problem.... Liberals unanimously believed that Bush was not up to the intellectual challenges of the job. But fearful of reenforcing a stereotype of left-wing elitism, they time and again shied away from pressing the argument. With the point thus conceded, Gore fought things out on the enemy terrain of character.... Three-plus years later we know better, or at least we should.... The job of the president of the United States is...to manage a wide range of complicated issues. That requires...intellectual curiosity, an ability to familiarize oneself with a broad range of views, the capacity—yes—to grasp nuances, to foresee the potential ramifications of one's decisions, and, simply, to think things through. Four years ago, these things were not considered necessary pieces of presidential equipment.

For that state of affairs, and its persistent dire consequences, Michael Kelly deserves a healthy share of the blame.

Hendrik Hertzberg's *Politics* is nearly as long as the other three books under review combined, and easily as rewarding. Its title is a homage to Dwight Macdonald's great magazine of the same name, published between 1944 and 1949. Macdonald, his predecessor at *The New Yorker*, taught him, Hertzberg avows, "just how good—how vigorous, how funny, how exhilarating—an engaged, indignant political polemic could be." He spends most of the "Author's Note" to *Politics* explaining why he admires Macdonald and why he himself does not measure up to his (and my) hero. The generosity and the modesty are both characteristic. Hertzberg indeed doesn't quite measure up to Macdonald: He's apparently never flirted with ideology or dallied with literature. Still, taking all in all, I'm not sure any other recent American writer comes as close.

There aren't enough indignant political polemics here for my taste—there hardly could be, in these wretched times. But what there is is exhilarating. Clarence Thomas's performance at his nomination hearing is given its due: "display[ing] both a coarse contempt for the very concept of evidence and a stunning readiness to slash at the fabric of democratic trust...he has forfeited his honor and besmirched his country." The case for Clinton's impeachment is annihilated: "What, exactly, is the justice that has been obstructed?...Obstacles may well have been placed in the path of an unaccountable prosecutorial bureaucracy that for obscure reasons has developed a single-minded obsession with discovering at any

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cost, and publicizing in sniggering detail, precisely what sexual acts were engaged in by the president and the former intern. One can only hope so. But in what sense does the promulgation of details of this kind constitute justice?" Hertzberg's comments on the 2000 election are splendidly scathing; less predictable but equally useful are his criticism of the cowardly way the news organizations that subsequently sponsored an ambitious study of the uncounted Florida ballots presented their findings, and his sharp reproach to Gore, who went missing after the inauguration and "essentially left voiceless those"—a majority of the voters—"who had placed their trust in him."

As these examples suggest, what really riles Hertzberg are violations of democratic procedure. Hence his noble devotion to proportional representation, the subject of three long and wholly persuasive essays plus a short, forceful defense of Lani Guinier. Likewise his proposals for abolishing filibusters and establishing Congressional term limits. Hence also, I suppose, his half-hearted effort to justify Nader's exclusion from the presidential debates in 2000—what other Gore supporter would even have bothered?

Hertzberg praises Macdonald's "fearlessness." In one respect, Hertzberg appears to me less than intellectually fearless. His understanding of the cold war, the Vietnam War and American foreign policy generally, though at the left margin of respectable opinion, remains within the bounds of conventional wisdom. "Why the War Was Immoral," published on the tenth anniversary of the Vietnam War's end in *The New Republic* (where Hertzberg was twice editor), argues that it was fought with "good intentions," for a "moral aim," the aim of "saving South Vietnam from communism...at a lower cost in suffering and death than the cost of a communist victory." This is the conventional liberal view, wrong for two reasons. The first is that the war was, as Macdonald recognized, "illegal." The reason Macdonald gave—"we *did* sign the UN covenant"— was correct, and if more liberals had had the courage and wisdom to say so then, they would have had an easier job of arguing against the invasion of Iraq in 2003. As Macdonald also recognized, the official US pretext for intervening—to defend the South against the North—was false. When the United States first intervened in force, the southern insurgency was still largely indigenous. Hertzberg does not acknowledge this.

The second reason Hertzberg's argument is inadequate goes to the central meaning of the cold war. The United States aimed to save South Vietnam and the rest of the Free

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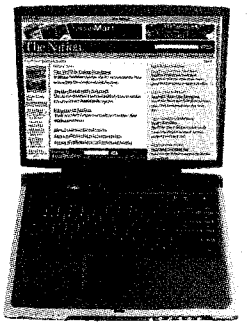

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World from Communism. Why? Because Communist regimes were invariably harshly repressive? They were; but so were many non-Communist regimes that the United States supported economically, diplomatically and militarily without exerting on them the slightest real pressure for political reform. What the United States has never supported, however, or even tolerated, is a regime that is unwilling to enter into "normal" trade or financial relations with American business. A country, to put it simply, in which no profits can be made by Americans. The presence or absence of profit opportunities, not the presence or absence of freedom, is what has traditionally determined American policy toward other regimes.

I am glad Hertzberg has never understood this. If he had, he would have said so, persistently and emphatically—he is morally, if not intellectually, fearless. In that case, he would have had, I suspect, many fewer opportunities to write about everything else, and the abundant harvest of graceful, amusing, discriminating and public-spirited prose collected in *Politics* might not have come to be. ■

In Dubious Battle

MICHAEL KAZIN

WAR AND THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY. By Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. Norton. 160 pp. $23.95.

Say what you will about the sins of the Bush Administration. But credit it with one small but welcome accomplishment: It has moved Arthur Schlesinger Jr. to give a vigorous lesson about the peril of keeping an arrogant moralist in the White House. The great liberal historian made his name by writing long, sympathetic, popular books about great liberal politicians: *The Age of Jackson*, *The Age of Roosevelt*, *A Thousand Days*, *Robert Kennedy and His Times*. Meanwhile, Schlesinger was never shy about making some history himself; he helped found Americans for Democratic Action, advised Adlai Stevenson's campaigns for President and was a special assistant in the Kennedy White House. At 86, he remains a passionate liberal who is friendly with leading Democrats and is eager to point out the follies of the Bushian right.

Yet, away from the bestseller lists, Schlesinger has often been a counselor of caution—about the twin dangers of breakneck ideology and unrivaled power. His cold war classic, *The Vital Center*, urged fellow liberals to resist Stalinism with as much fervor as they spurned the anti-Communist right. *The Imperial Presidency*, published just as Watergate became a crisis, stuck a lasting name on the grab for supremacy by the executive branch. And in *The Disuniting of America*, Schlesinger took radical multiculturalists to task for viewing American nationalism as little more than a device for the oppression of ethnic minorities.

His books, always written with supreme confidence and arresting prose, have seldom found favor in the pages of this magazine. Most leftists wrote off Schlesinger as the court historian of the liberal establishment, at least when such an animal truly existed. But his most thoughtful and provocative work has always been critical of dogmatic and domineering officeholders rather than a tribute to liberal heroes. Inspiring much of that writing is the ironic judgment Schlesinger learned from his friend, the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr: Moralists who divide the world between absolute evil and spotless virtue usually impede the progress of the good. As Niebuhr wrote, smack in the middle of the Korean War and at the height of McCarthyism, "A too confident sense of justice always leads to injustice."

How apt that sounds half a century later. The debacle in Iraq provides, for Schlesinger, a perfect illustration of why would-be messiahs make bad Presidents. Based on intelligence that was little more than a compilation of wishful thinking, George W. Bush went to war for an idea—that "converting the Arab world to representative democracy" was both feasible and right. In so doing, he made a radical change in the doctrine of American foreign policy. Instead of containing and deterring potential enemies, as during the cold war, Bush declared that the United States had a duty to make war so that others would not do the same.

Schlesinger delivers this now-familiar indictment with a dash of wit. He compares Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld to the relentless "precogs" in Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report*, who can "see" crimes and stop them before they occur. But, writes Schlesinger, "in the real world, preventive war depends on accurate intelligence, which is all too often unavailable, supplemented by dubious historical analogies." The Bush team imagined the invasion of Iraq would look like the liberation of France or Italy near the end of World War II; instead, it stirs memories of Vietnam.

Although there's nothing particularly original about Schlesinger's argument, he does ground it in a more sober historical critique than most antiwar critics have offered. Unilateralism, he points out, is a venerable tradition in US foreign policy. Until World War I, George Washington's doctrine of no "permanent alliances" governed America's relationships with the outside world. Woodrow Wilson broke the habit of going it alone when he sought to pin the nation's security to a powerful League of Nations. But his own unbending moralism sabotaged the enterprise, and it wasn't revived until the 1940s, when the more pragmatic FDR converted a wartime alliance into the United Nations, and Harry Truman mobilized the anti-Soviet governments of Europe into NATO.

In contrast, George W. Bush harks back to those nineteenth-century Presidents who believed America should act only by itself and for itself. Yet, at the same time, he longs to convert the world to freedom, Republican style. No wonder his precog war has been such a disaster.

Useful as they are, Schlesinger's reflections are not honest enough about the past. The scholar who did much to glorify the Kennedys still views the historical record with the blinders of a partisan. He fails to reckon with the preventive, unilateral battles that liberal Democrats fought in the name of defeating Communism. Schlesinger neglects the proxy invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs (which, as a White House official, he warned against) and glosses over the war in Indochina, which most US allies opposed and which neither JFK nor Lyndon Johnson asked the UN to sanction. Only in Europe did American policymakers really work in partnership with like-minded leaders. And that alliance succeeded only because its adversaries in the Soviet bloc were fast losing the allegiance of their own people. The reality in Cuba and Vietnam was quite different; even many foes of state socialism regarded Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro as authentic fighters for national independence.

Other essays in this little book go beyond

Michael Kazin, who is writing a biography of William Jennings Bryan, teaches history at Georgetown University.

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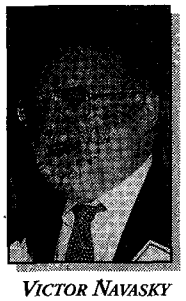

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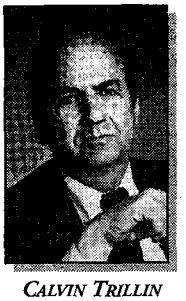

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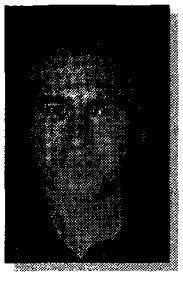

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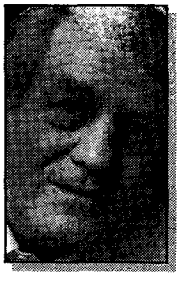

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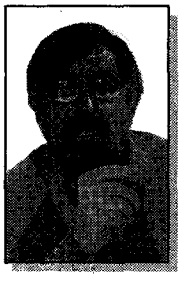

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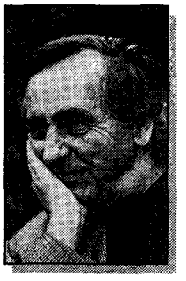

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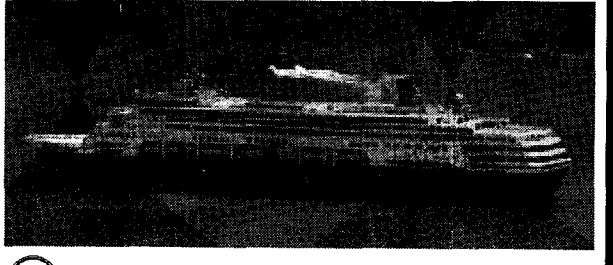

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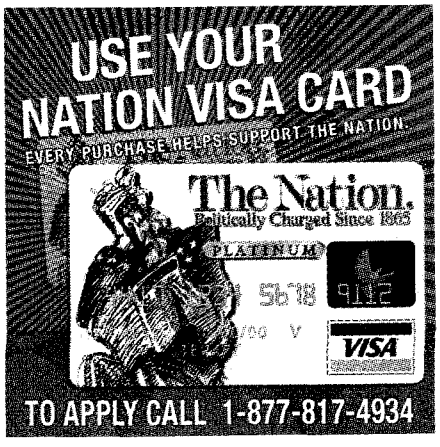

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the pitfalls of going it alone. Schlesinger issues a rebuke to those who would stifle dissent in wartime. He shows that, from John Adams's Sedition Act to John Ashcroft's Patriot Act, such measures fail to achieve their ends and make their architects look nasty in the light of history. Less cogent is an essay that proposes an overly complex scheme to replace the Electoral College. Yet another makes the unremarkable observation that, in the sweep of world history, democracy is a young form of government that is now imperiled by "religious fanaticism" and "the politics of identity." Like most op-eds, such pieces are not likely to change many minds or hold their value for long.

Fortunately, the citizen-scholar saves his best thinking for last. After surveying the errors of policy-makers, past and present, Schlesinger asks, "What use is history anyway?" His answer is a nugget of good sense. Historians are neither useful for predicting the future nor for reducing the past to a single, overriding variable—be it class struggle, religious faith or the advance of free markets. What they can do is to explain why an empire faltered or a revolution turned dictatorial—and point to features of those events that often recur, although the details of each case cannot.

His larger point echoes what Niebuhr preached and Isaiah Berlin argued in his luminous, if repetitive, studies in intellectual history: Those who believe they have found the key to history inevitably lose their way in a swamp of self-righteousness, from which tyranny grows. Leftists who dismiss this as a refusal to take sides fail to realize that irony remains an essential tool for an American political historian. Because our nation's ideals are so audaciously universalist and transcendent, they will always disappoint, even anger those who take them seriously.

Schlesinger concludes, "History should lead statesmen to a profound and humbling sense of human frailty—to a recognition of the fact, so insistently demonstrated by experience and so tragically destructive of our most cherished certitudes, that the possibilities of history are far richer and more various than the human intellect is likely to conceive." That wisdom, he quickly adds, does not relieve us "from the necessity of meeting our obligations." The last word is undefined, perhaps to indicate its moral complexity. Schlesinger, who is writing the second volume of his memoirs, has not retired from the craft of history writing. But those sentences should endure as a fitting epitaph for a life of often profound, always contentious work. ■

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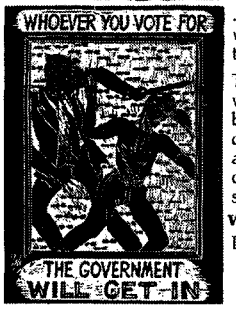

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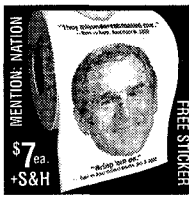
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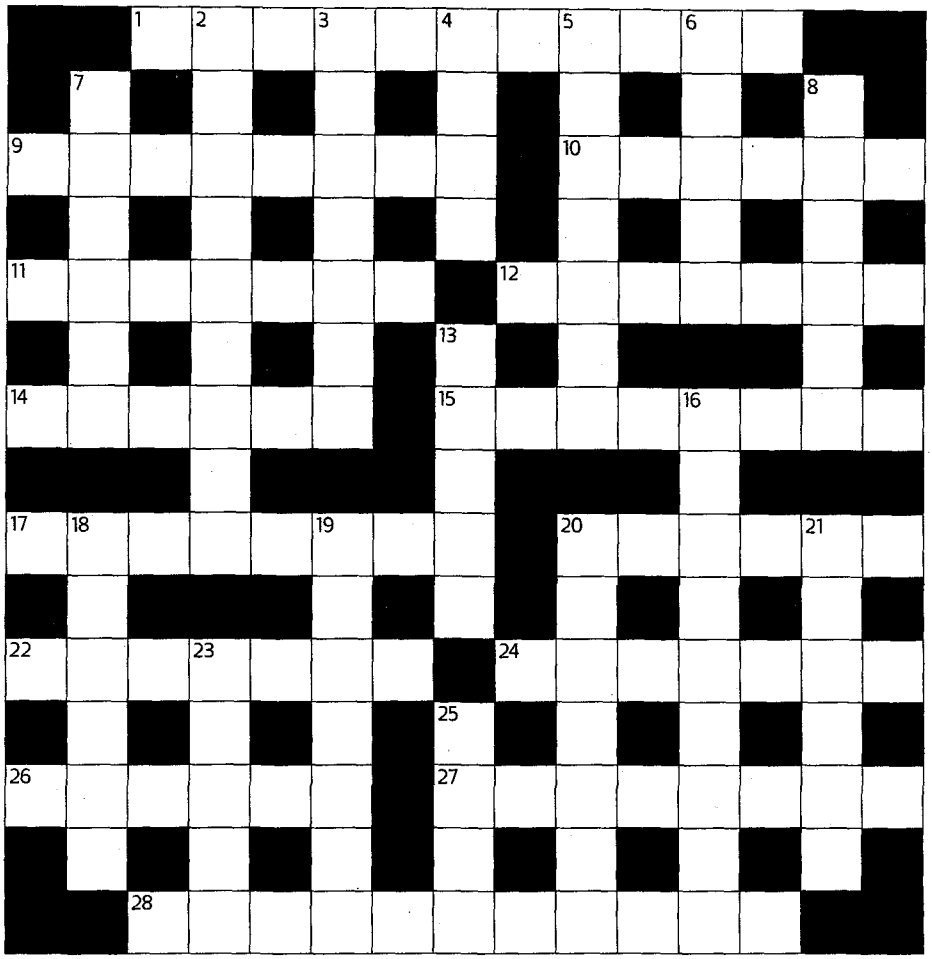

ACROSS

1 A job has big strings attached around the head—being a matter of punctuation or an address for someone. (11)

9 The rail goes a little crooked, with a bunch of women inside such, but Mozart found them out. (8)

10 What tellers sometimes do to get a little fancy work let out. (6)

11 A place we are supposed to remember at Delaware, briefly—the way a certain dessert might be ordered. (1,2,4)

12 What some hope to find in Hollywood is most backward and warped, a little way inside. (7)

14 Boring things seem to like what George looked for. (6)

15 What cold bed-linen feels like was common in old age. (3,5)

17 Seemingly deserved by such as Oliver, which may be pointed out for the traveler. (3,5)

20 Given temporarily to the Italian, it might be in the soup. (6)

22 Colored, that is, like a sort of cookie—or a little one in the pack. (7)

24 Lincoln's was at 1600 Pennsylvia Avenue or, more memorably, Gettysburg. (7)

26 The point around which the plate gets broken is something we all share. (6)

27 Only a stupid type would be ranting about nothing this way! (8)

28 Means to do something like a White Whaler, perhaps (11)

DOWN

2 Possibly impart what a shrew might do on arising, and grouse. (9)

3 He didn't like those on a crusade, unfortunately coming up with a lot of noise! (7)

4, 13 and **25** Nice quarters for the traveler, according to Foster. (4,4,1,4)

5 and **20** That finishes it, as the cockney says as he covers the jam! (4,3,3,2,2)

6 See 23

7 Just the ordinary guy who happened to cut down a tree… (6)

8 …or Gore, to a 7 in London, in recess. (6)

13 See 4

16 They're not meant to be salaries, exactly—but they may involve a bit of cash, or distinction given the operatic offering. (9)

18 What anarchistic countries might prove. (6)

19 I get in the list, but revel noisily because of it. (7)

20 See 5 down

21 Bats, as some say, prove the point in pointless environment. (6)

23 and **6** down The cathedral of song has something that pulls up the chemical compound of trees, in a way. (10)

25 See 4 down

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E	N	T	A	I	L	S	■	G	U	I	L	D	E	R
A	■	E	■	L	■	H	■	E	■	L	■	I	■	D
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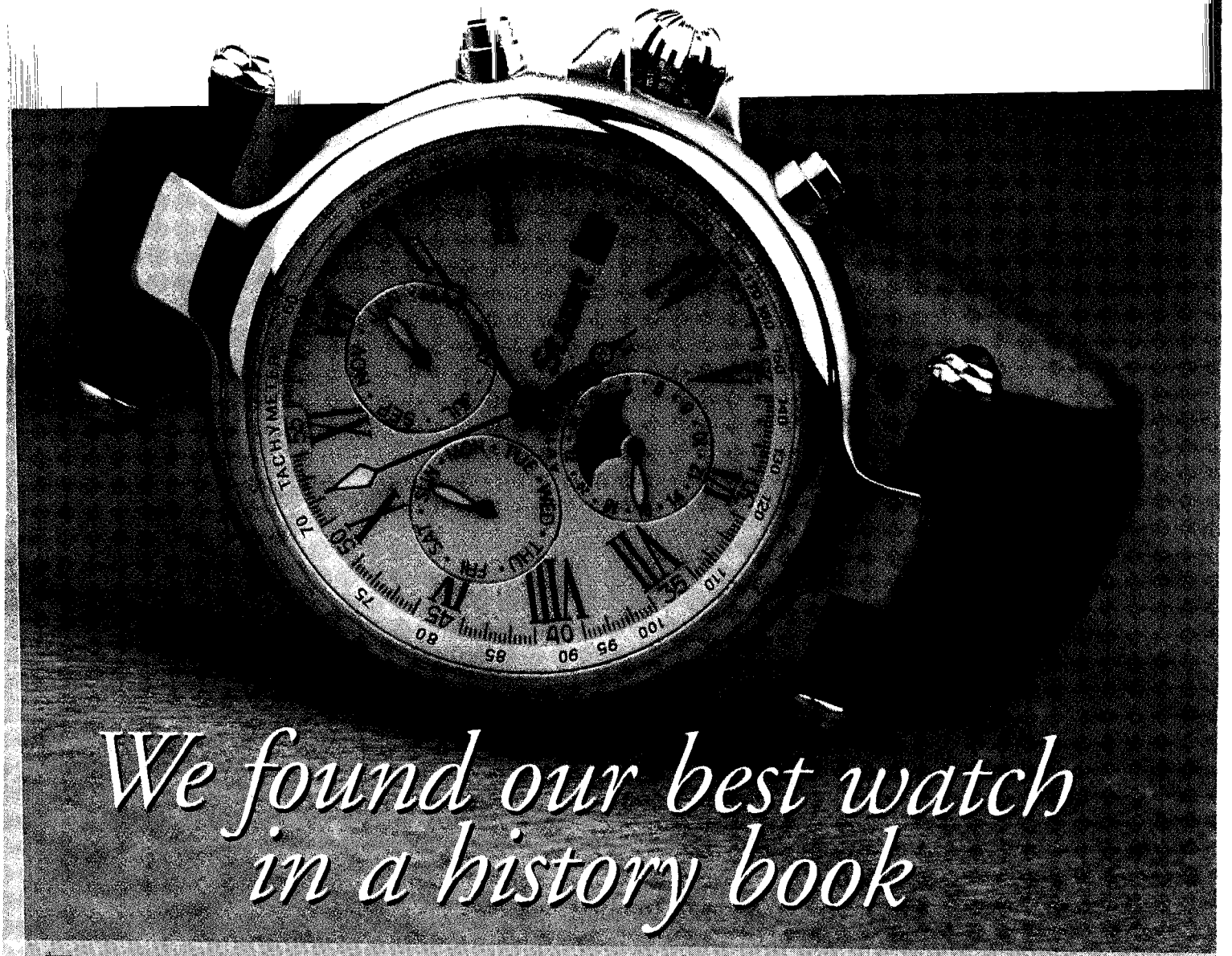

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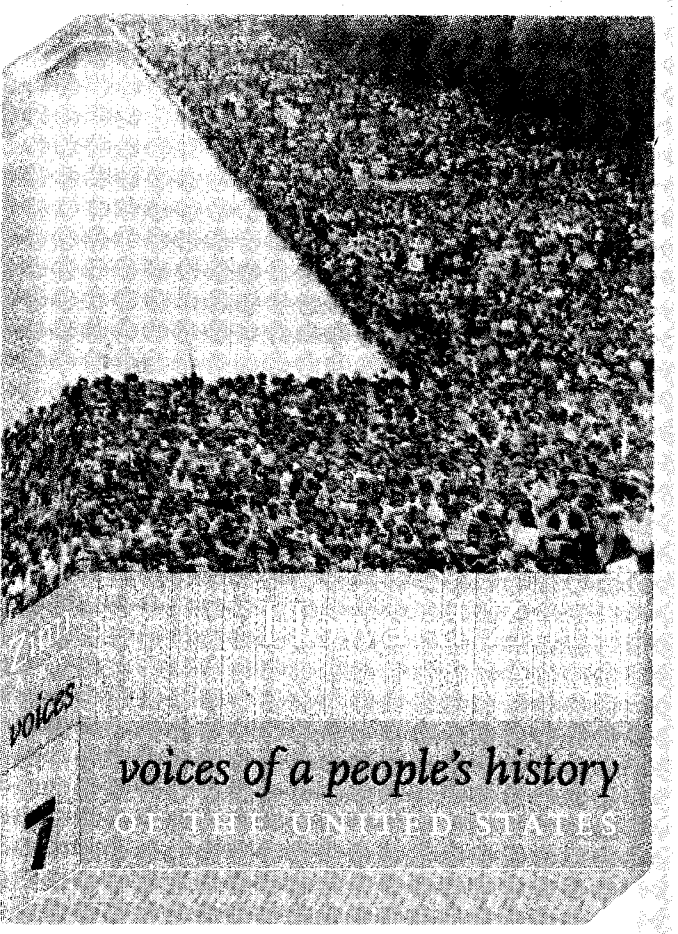

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